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AUGUST 1997

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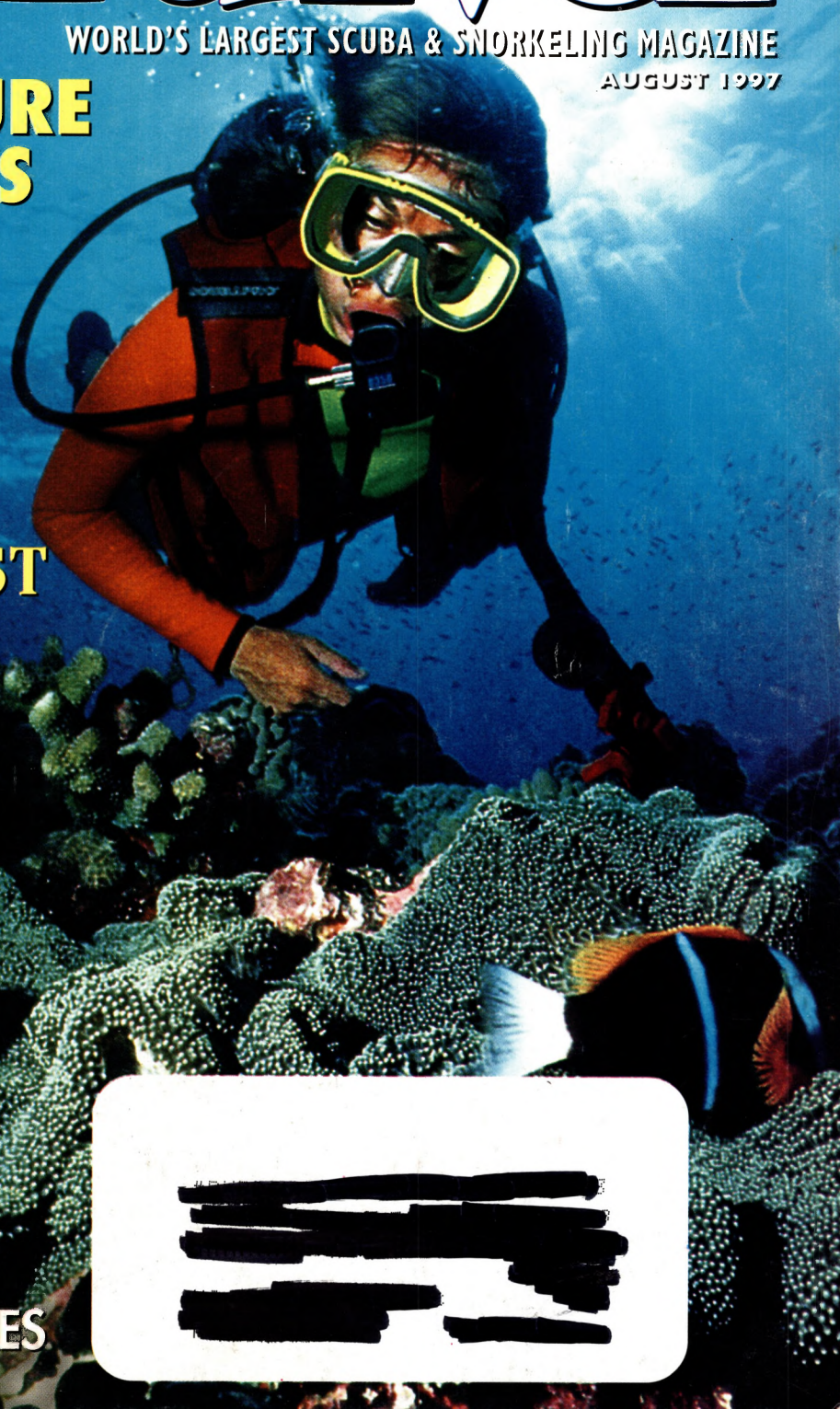
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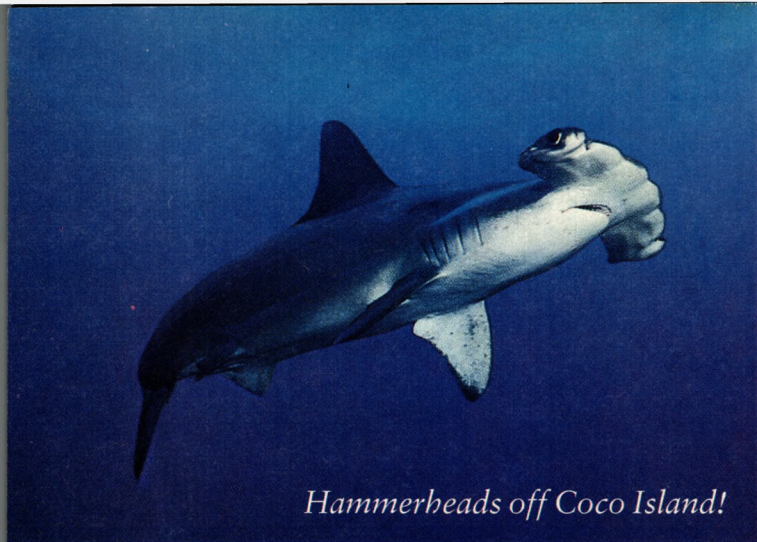
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THERE'S ONLY ONE

skin diver

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*Oceanic's
DataTrans Plus
does it all*



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About the cover: A diver exploring the crystal blue water surrounding the Solomon Islands comes across two Orange-Fin Anemonefish (Amphiprion chrysopterus) nestled in the safety of their host anemone. The Solomons, off New Guinea in the South Pacific, is one of the alluring, adventure hotspots covered in this issue. From the Pacific to the Caribbean to live-aboard excursions off Costa Rica and in the Maldives, discover the dive vacation you've always dreamed about and make it a reality. Photo/Astrid Witte and Casey Mahaney.

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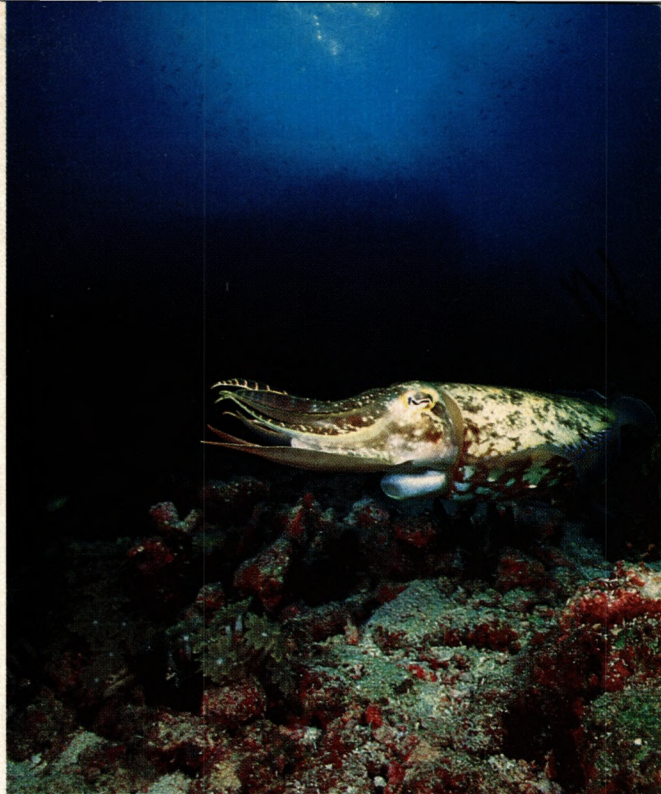
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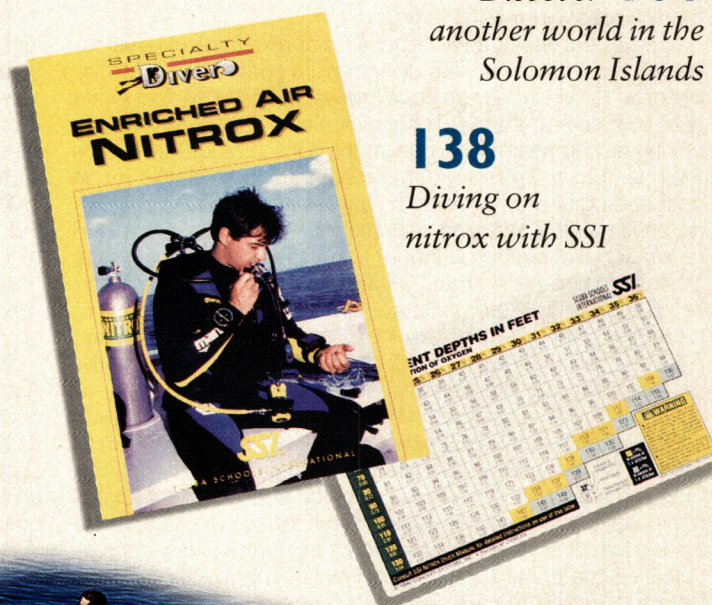
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PROJECT DIVE EXPLORATION



There's some new and very interesting developments in the area of diving safety and medicine; this month's editorial will be dedicated to sharing these developments with you. But first, a little background information that will help you understand why these developments are needed.

Historically, the diving world has relied heavily on other institutions (particularly the U.S. Navy and other navies around the world) to undertake huge, very costly studies that supply us with the basic medical information and guidelines we need to dive safely. First and foremost in the history of diving was the development of the U.S. Navy's famous dive tables, on which several generations of divers relied to dive safely. These tables also provided basic research into hyperbaric medicine and laid the cornerstone for much of diving medicine, or hyperbaric medicine, as we know it today.

In a perfect world, such peacetime applications of naval research would continue and divers would continue to enjoy the benefits. However, as everyone knows, it is not a perfect world and, sorry to say, that kind of research (into new tables and exploring new frontiers of diving activity) will not be forthcoming in the near future. The navy, it turns out, has done just as much cost cutting and downsizing as any other large business; hyperbaric medical research, which would have been valuable to recreational divers, is no longer part of its agenda. Ditto with other large non-profit organizations that might have been interested in picking up the slack. About the only people who might be willing to do diving research, it now turns out, are divers! And, even as an industry, we don't have the money to fund the projects necessary to research better ways to dive.

Part of the reason research is not high on anyone's agenda is that not many people are getting bent. Indeed, there were less than 1,000 cases last year. Nearly all of these victims of decompression illness (DCI) were able, with the help of trained chamber staffs, to make a full recovery. Since divers in the U.S. make a minimum of 10 million dives a year (and that is a very conservative estimate), getting hit by lightning is more common than getting bent! Some feel we can't completely eliminate the bends without eliminating diving and they may be right. How-


ever, even though the numbers of bends and arterial gas embolism cases are very small, we should still be trying to make diving even safer than it already is.

In any case, ongoing research into better and more enjoyable diving should not be sacrificed just because large institutions have lost the funding to do the job for us. And, it turns out, the answer to this dilemma may be no farther away than your personal dive computer! Dive computers, which have become commonplace over the last ten years, are increasingly able to store all of the data about every dive made: time and date of dive, descent rate, ascent rate and bottom time. This is just the type of data the navy used to collect on its divers (who do not resemble recreational divers at all). If we can find some way to get the information out of the individual dive computers and into the experts' hands, the data will tell us some truly amazing things about the way we actually dive. (The way we actually dive is quite different from the way we say we dive). Important information on safety and future dive enjoyment may be gleaned from such data.

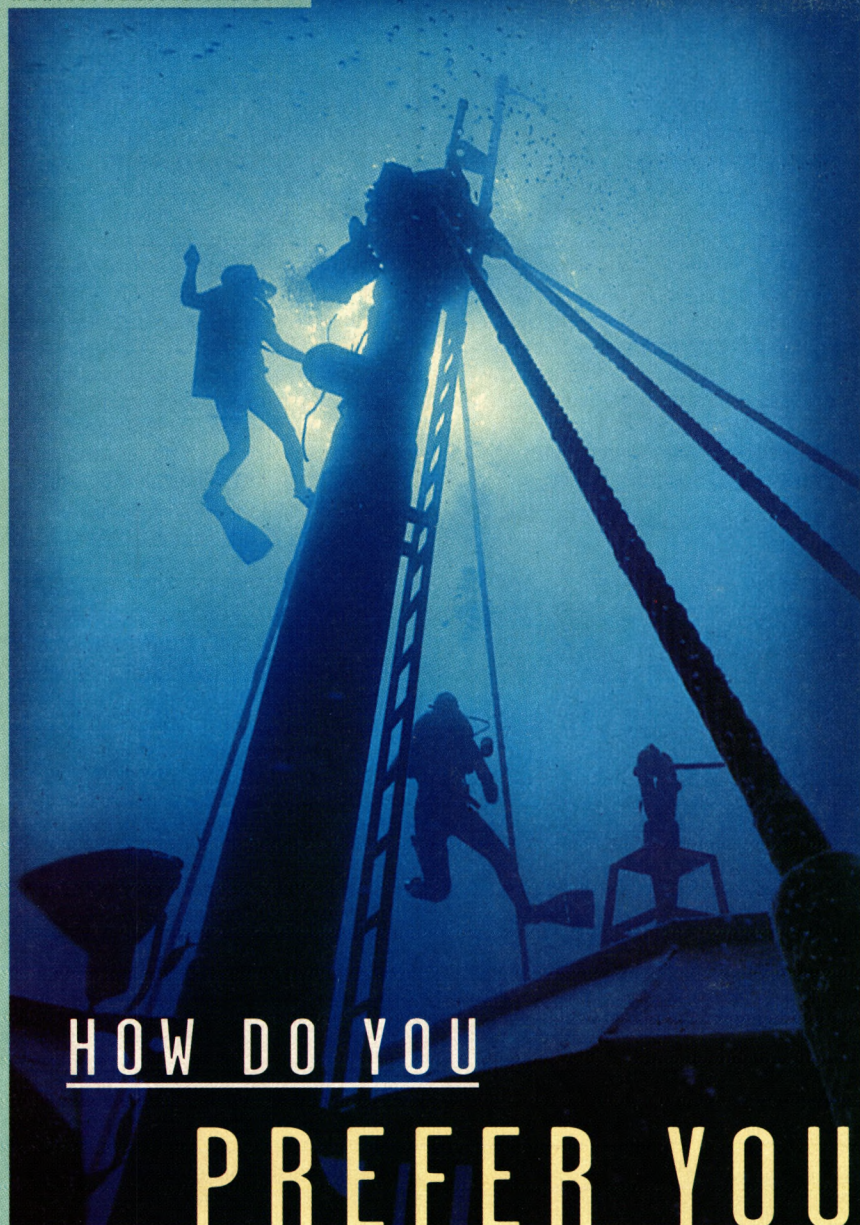
For the next year, Project Dive Exploration will begin to collect electronic dive computer data from recreational divers and instructors all around the world. During this same time, scientists and researchers will be poring over the data to pinpoint exactly what recommendations they can offer for safer and more enjoyable diving. This could be very good news for all ocean explorers and a boon to diving safety.

This project can only be accomplished through a combined industry coalition of equipment manufacturers, dive retailers, resorts, live-aboards and certification agencies. It is, indeed, refreshing to see just how many companies are willing to use their resources to help us all understand more about diving medicine and about the way divers actually dive.

Project Dive Exploration is being coordinated by the Divers Alert Network (DAN). It also has the full support of SKIN DIVER and you may look forward to frequent updates in coming issues as well as notification of opportunities for you to participate. The success of the project will hinge on your personal cooperation and help as we transfer the data from your dive computer to a mainframe.

So for now, please keep logging those dives electronically and we'll get around to asking you to share that information with us in the near future. It will be a valuable contribution to future and present generations of divers. 

BILL GLEASON
PUBLISHER & EDITOR



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Dive In with Scuba Club Cozumel

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BILL GLEASON



Just a ten minute walk from the small town of San Miguel, on the island of Cozumel, will bring you to the best dive resort in all of Mexico. It's called Scuba Club Cozumel and it sets a standard of excellence matched by only a few dive resorts in the world. It's nestled behind wrought iron gates. To the casual passerby, it might appear to be a private residence, because it fits into the laidback, serene surroundings of Cozumel so well.

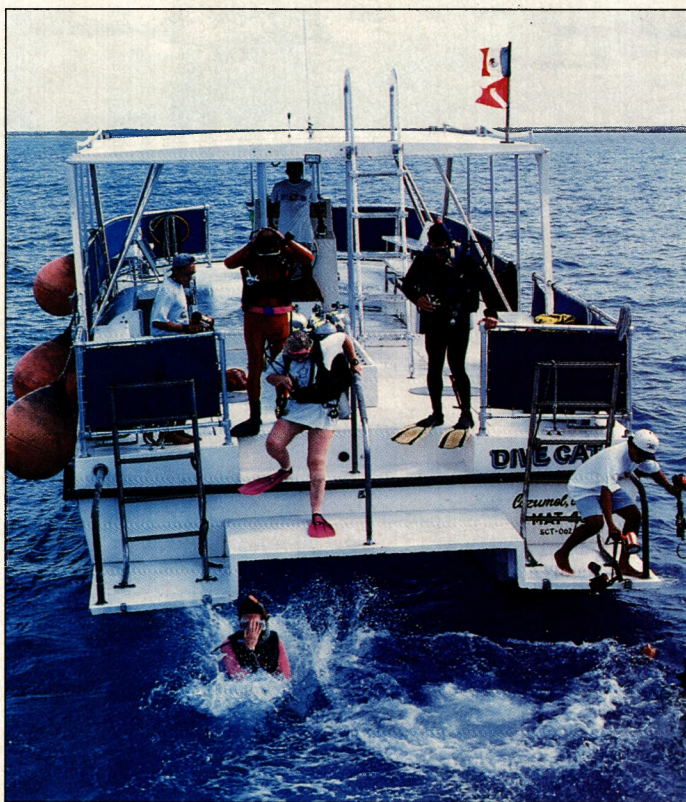
Scuba Club is a resort for divers who want comfortable rooms, good food and a dive operation offering excellent diving—all delivered without much fanfare. Every day, Scuba Club continues to serve the finest diving you can find in Cozumel. Its repeat business is among the highest of all dive resorts in the world; it seems that once divers find this spot, they are reluctant to even try other ones!

Until recently, Scuba Club Cozumel was known as the Galapago Inn. Now under the ownership and management of a brand new company, the name was changed to reflect the improvements made to the property. They are extensive but most suit the resort so well that only veteran repeat visitors will know how

dramatic they are—until you get to the dive operation! Scuba-Cozumel has added two new, large monohulls to its existing fleet. The two state of the art catamarans are still the backbone of the diving fleet (which includes some seven vessels in all) but previous guests indicated they would like the option of diving from monohulls as well. And when guests speak at Scuba-Cozumel, the management not only listens but usually does something about it! In this case, it was the acquisition and outfitting of the two new boats. With four large, comfortable vessels, Scuba-Cozumel can now deliver guests to the island's finest diving in record time and comfort. The remaining three vessels are still in service for small groups or by special request.



Above: The Scuba-Cozumel staff. The backbone of Scuba-Cozumel's dive fleet is its two, state of the art catamarans, one of which is shown below. There are seven vessels in all, including two new monohulls.



Behind the scenes at the dive operation, compressors have been added and capacity (never a problem) increased. This style of "fixing things before they break" is certainly not typical of the land just to the south of the U.S. border but it is a trademark style of operation for Scuba Club Cozumel. Veteran managers Tim and Patti Massimino continue to oversee all operations at the club, and report being delighted with the new boats and improvements at SCC!

For visiting divers, this resort works better than a Swiss watch. All visitors are usually on a weekly package, which includes a very comfortable room, all diving and all meals. The resort's schedule is set to diving time; all meals, boat departures and scheduled events happen right on time. Again, a rarity in the Mañana Land but an everyday occurrence at the club. You begin with breakfast, board one of the boats for a two tank dive and get to explore the wonders of **Punta Sur, Palancar and Santa Rosa**. (Diving on nearly all of Cozumel's sites is drift diving; the staff will be happy to provide you with tips and techniques for doing it successfully.) The divers' lunch is ready when the boats return, usually around one o'clock, and is a leisurely affair. While many visitors often retire to the beach-side hammocks for the afternoon, the dive operation offers additional training for those inclined and special afternoon and evening (night) dives are available

upon request. Spectacular sunset dinners at the Fat Grouper complete the day and guests usually retire fairly early. SCC is a place to dive and relax, much different from the sometimes frantic pace of downtown San Miguel (particularly when the cruise ships are in town).

The new Scuba Club Cozumel is one of the brightest stars in the diving world and will continue to set aggressive performance requirements for both its operation and staff. The Scuba Club Cozumel package is one of the best values in diving today and it's delivered with an extremely high level of professionalism. That's really good news for traveling divers. For more information on Scuba Club Cozumel, please call (800) 847-5708, (713) 783-3305 or visit the Web site at <http://www.scubaclubcozumel.com>.

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- New! Fiji (Summer 1997)
- New! Sere-Ni-Wai, Fiji
- Nitrox-Rebreathers
- Palau

St. Vincent and

Stroll Along a Caramel Colored Beach and Enter a Diver's State of Bliss

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN



Christina Jensen swims among the lush soft corals and sponges on the west side of Bequia.



Snorkelers, supported by St. Vincent's glassy, aquamarine water, head for the Bat Caves.



Union Island's shark pool features a family of Nurse Sharks (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*).

the Grenadines

Background photo:
Walks along Palm Island
Beach reveal the wave
washed tranquility of a
Caribbean afternoon.
Right: Sailboats dot
Bequia's blue-hued
Admiralty Bay.



beaten path. Settled initially by a progression of peoples from South America, including the Ciboney, Arawaks and finally the Caribs, St. Vincent was the lone Caribbean hold-out against European settlement for nearly 200 years. The fierce Caribs made good use of the island's mountainous terrain and dense vegetation, keeping the British and French at bay until finally surrendering in

St. Vincent and the Grenadines are strewn across 45 miles of the Caribbean like a handful of emeralds on blue velvet. Thirty-two islands altogether, their green volcanic hills stand out intensely against the vivid blue sea. The eastern sides of the islands leap from the water with sudden cliffs and rocky points; on the west they ease gently down with white sand and soft crescent bays. Shallow reefs of golden brown coral stand in the clear water between the islands like welcome signs for divers.

These verdant islands are not on the usual list of places divers tend to go. In fact, St. Vincent and the Grenadines have a history of staying off the

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

St. Vincent and the Grenadines are best known for:

- Crystal clear water
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- Healthy reefs and lush Black Corals
- Botanical Gardens

1797. Even so, when Fort Charlotte was built by the British in 1806 to keep the French out, its guns were not pointed seaward but inland, to defend against the last remaining Caribs. St. Vincent and the Grenadines became a

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Katja Manson instructs two students in the use of rebreathers.

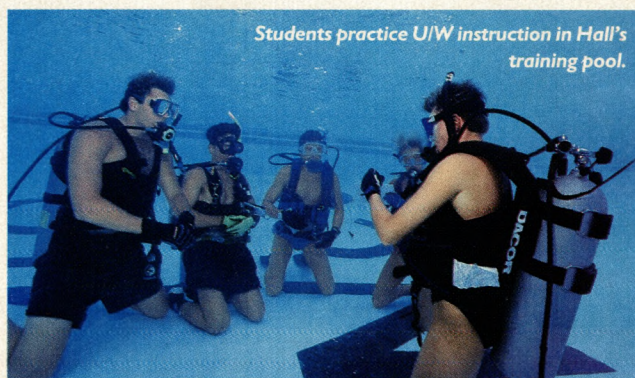


The cable reel of the Thunderbolt, a favorite training wreck off Marathon.

Ten Weeks to Take-Off

LAUNCHING A CAREER IN DIVING

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN



Students practice U/W instruction in Hall's training pool.

If you could have a responsible, well-paying job in the dive industry ten weeks from today, regardless of your current experience level, would you take it? That's the question Bob Brayman is asking at his International Career Diving Institute at Hall's in Marathon, Florida. Hall's has a long tradition of turning out exceptionally well-trained dive instructors, so that's a startling invitation. How is it possible? You have to be a diver with a fair amount of experience to apply for instructor training anywhere else. To find out the whole story, SKIN DIVER sent me to the Florida Keys to talk to Bob.

SDM: Bob, how can someone with no prior experience come to Hall's and walk out ten weeks later fully qualified as an instructor?

BRAYMAN: The International Career Diving Institute at Hall's is a private vocational school and, like any other vocational school in the educational system, we provide all the necessary training for our students. You don't have to complete an apprenticeship in other vocations and we don't think you should have to in diving. We wanted to develop a curriculum that placed no barriers in front of

students. We'll make sure you have all the required dives and certifications when you graduate but you don't have to start on your own before you get here.

SDM: What is different at Hall's that lets you make this policy work?

BRAYMAN: Most dive training centers are aligned with a particular certifying agency such as PADI or NAUI and they are locked into the products of that agency. At Hall's we decided to remove the importance of those agency labels and concentrate on specific course content. So, in assembling our curriculum, we side-stepped the one agency route and picked the best training available for each phase of the program. We asked ourselves, what exactly is needed to turn out the most competent graduate possible? As a result, our professional career program incorporates training from eight major certifying agencies.

SDM: Is that a radically new approach?

BRAYMAN: Well, it's definitely a new way to focus on the value of each hour of training but it's also a natural extension of the same approach that has made the International Diving Career Institute at

Hall's such a success since it was established in 1978.

SDM: And how does that approach work in the job market?

BRAYMAN: It works wonders! It also means we can work with our students however we need to in order to ensure they are good. We can make sure they aren't just able to pass a test, they can actually do the job well. Real competence is far more important than a paper certificate in getting hired and succeeding at your job.

SDM: How do you instill that kind of competence in your students?

BRAYMAN: Naturally, the course work provides specific checks that must be completed, but the real test is in actually doing any task. Instructor candidates at Hall's teach real students under real conditions. Of course, they do it under the watchful eye of a Hall's Instructor Trainer but the realism is there. The precisely selected courses build the basic level of competence and the realistic experience puts the polish on it. The realism extends to every facet of the diving business, too. We teach our students to sell and repair

(Continued on Page 111)

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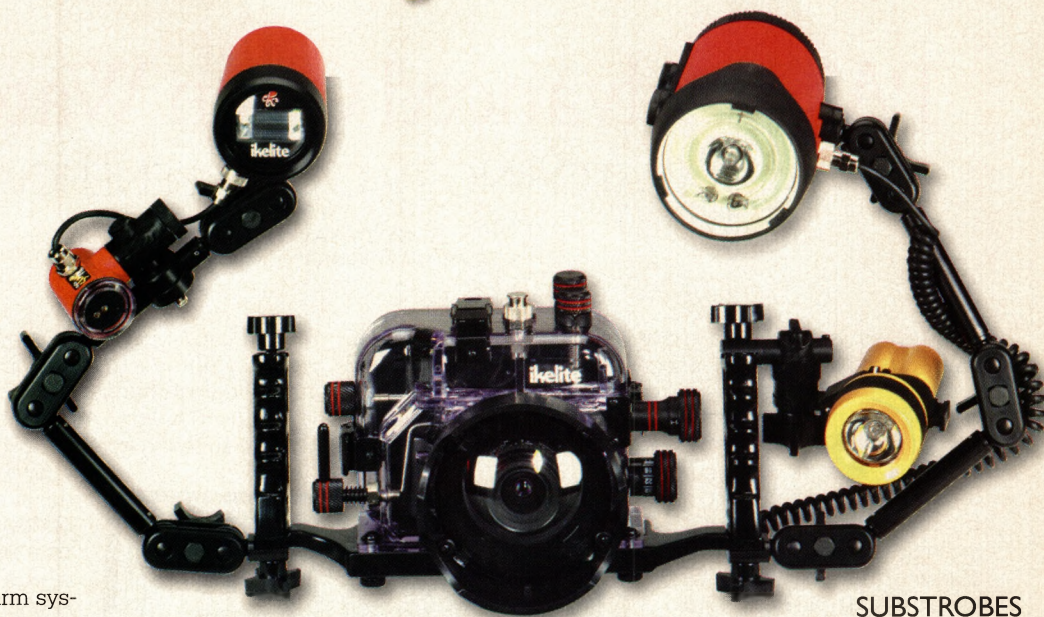
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BY TY SAWYER

PHOTO BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Okay, so you've learned to dive. With open water certification card in hand you can rent or buy gear, get your tank filled and dive to your heart's content in most places in the world. But, are you fully able to experience the vast underwater environment and all the variety it offers? Do you feel comfortable exploring open water at night? Can you effectively navigate back to the boat or shore? How about diving in deeper waters and understanding the associated physical effects? It's all part of a fuller diving experience. It's also part of continuing your training, expanding your base of knowledge and becoming a safer, better diver. To help you along, PADI has produced a video meant to accompany its Advanced Open Water or Advanced Plus certification courses: PADI's *Adventures in Diving*.

The great thing about furthering your knowledge in diving is it is very water intensive. Class time is at a minimum. In fact, you're expected to review most of the course materials before the activity takes place. The instructor will usually brief you and answer any questions you might have on site, just prior to the dive. This makes the ocean the classroom and mental preparedness a premium. This is where the *Adventures in Diving* video becomes a great learning tool.

Advanced certification requires divers to satisfy three core activities: underwater navigation, deep diving and night diving. The video covers the specific materials necessary for each activity and their proper use. With the video you get to see divers performing tasks correctly and in a variety of underwater conditions. This allows divers new to the activity to be able to visualize and mimic good techniques. The video medium also gives students a level of understanding, and perhaps comfort, that static images in books can't.

For Underwater Navigation the video explains the two types of compasses used and their differences; the accurate method of using the lubber line and bezel; and the various techniques students will be asked to perform.

For Deep Diving, decompression sickness and nitrogen narcosis symptoms and preventions are reviewed, as are the physiological changes that occur at depths between 60 and 130 feet. The video demonstrates the way divers act when they're suffering from narcosis, which is great for those who

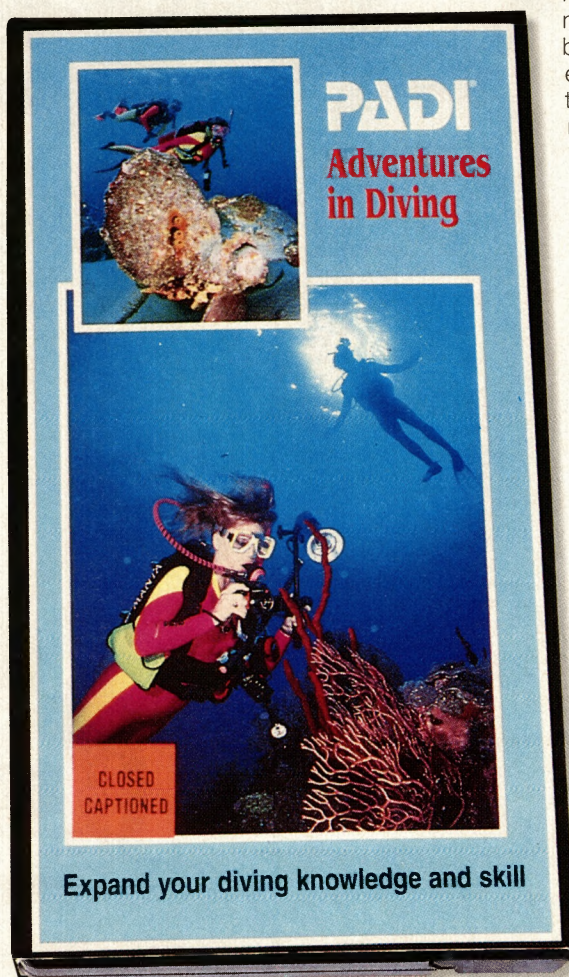
know what the symptoms are but may not know how to recognize them in a buddy. Close monitoring of air supply, establishing safety margins, the importance of buoyancy control—and more—are also covered in this section.

Night Diving extensively covers both the tools (lights) and the methods. The types of lights and the need for redundancy are emphasized. Students are alerted to the need for added safety margins in this section because of the unique nature of diving in the dark. Lighted lines, strobes, glow sticks and what to do if you lose your buddy or are overcome by vertigo are all reviewed here. Also, the diver etiquette particular to night diving, such as not shining the light in your buddy's eyes and how to communicate, is reviewed here.

Two elective courses are required for the Advanced Diver certification; the Advanced Plus requires six. The electives allow you to personalize your advanced training to fit your goals, desires or interests as a diver. Do you want to explore wrecks? Become an underwater videographer? Are you interested in identifying and understanding the creatures of the reef? Do you need to master buoyancy? Do you need to know the specialized techniques of drysuit diving? All these and more are previewed and, because elective specialties allow you to pursue your own interests/needs, it can make diving much more satisfying and fun.

All in all this video is an effective supplement to the manual and water work. The course material is presented with great clarity and, in addition to the technical aspects of advanced diving, the video always has its pulse on the beauty, fun and variety of diving.

For more information, contact PADI at 1251 E. Dyer Road, #100, Santa Ana, California 92705; (714) 540-7234, fax (714) 540-2609. 🐠



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Ocean Fest Hosts Largest U/W Cleanup of All Time

SEPTEMBER 19 TO 21

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL GLEASON

Every September, an unusual and unique event takes place. For the last 14 years, the third weekend of September has been the target date for the largest international beach cleanup in the world. Several years ago, the diving world got involved and helped (through the efforts of volunteers, PADI and the Center for Marine Conservation) make this weekend the largest underwater cleanup of all time. Last year, more than 30,000 divers in all 50 states and in 84 countries combined their efforts to remove tons of trash. This September, we will again see thousands of divers hitting the water to get rid of the litter and trash that damage the underwater world!

This year, we can add another unique event! The sponsors of Ocean Fest, a weekend diving event held in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, have enlisted the services of more than 20 Florida based dive operators to host the Largest U/W Cleanup of All Time. They hope to enlist thousands of divers in their campaign and have designed an event that just might become one of the most exciting things to hit the diving highway in some time!

Ocean Fest will take place September 19, 20 and 21 in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea.

It will be a giant open air festival featuring more than 75 different diving and snorkeling exhibits under giant tents. But don't think that this is just another dive show. What sets Ocean Fest apart is that you will be able to go diving. More than 20 charter boat operators and numerous private boats will be offering dive services at the events. In addition, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea also has great shore diving, so getting a dive in will be as easy as walking to the beach. Divers and snorkelers can participate in an underwater Treasure Hunt on Saturday and the Largest Underwater Cleanup of All Time on Sunday.

Dive manufacturers and retailers will have demo equipment on hand for divers to try out and there will be ongoing equipment seminars and how-to classes on everything from underwater photography to advanced—balanced—buoyancy control. The technical dive community will also be there in force, giving divers the opportunity to learn about ni-

trox, trimix and rebreather diving options!

In addition to the Treasure Hunt, cleanup and other events for divers, there will be snorkeling and learn-to-dive sessions. The event will cater to divers, snorkelers and their families. Don't miss the food and entertainment centers, they are set to be rocking all weekend long! If that's not enough to entice you to dive at Ocean Fest this September, there's also more than \$30,000 in prizes slated to be given away!

The Sunday cleanup will be conducted from dive charter vessels, private boats and from shore. Divers and snorkelers will scour nearby areas to remove as much trash as possible. Since regularly visited dive sites are usually cleaned on an ongoing basis by dive-masters and divers, special trash sites have been selected that will give participants plenty of opportunities to fill their goodie bags with as much trash as they can handle!

The Ocean Fest Largest U/W Cleanup of All Time is co-sponsored by PADI, the Center for Marine Conservation, DEMA and SKIN DIVER. Any divers interested in participating in the Lauderdale-by-the-Sea Largest U/W Cleanup of All Time only have to show up at the event and secure a spot on a boat to get involved in this great activity. Divers in other parts of the U.S. or around the world seeking information on other cleanup events should call the CMC cleanup hotline at (800) CMC-BEACH or (804) 851-4183.

Ocean Fest is cosponsored by the Lauderdale-by-the-Sea Chamber of Commerce and Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures. For information regarding the festival, call (800) 327-8150 or (954) 462-3400. SKIN DIVER will be there in full force, so if you'd like to go diving with us, and maybe pick up some trash or get rid of some monofilament, just put it on your calendar: The third weekend in September, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea—be there!

The Largest U/W Cleanup of All Time is just one of the many opportunities to get wet, have fun and win some great prizes at Ocean Fest '97. 🐠



photo/Susan Swygert



Inset: Divers show off a wild assortment of trash recovered, including several old shoes. Above: Overachieving divers at this Florida beach recovered so much trash that the vehicle brought to carry it off has become overloaded. The marine environment, though, was much relieved.



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Bonaire's *Intimate Seaside Resort*

BRUCE BOWKER'S CARIB INN

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE



SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

The Carib Inn is best known for:

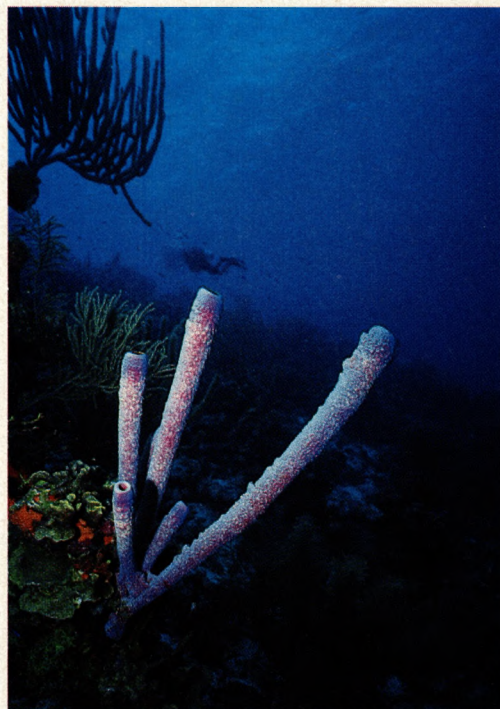
- Intimate setting
- Staff longevity
- Well stocked dive shop
- No handholding
- Seaside location

It's become tradition: We arrive at Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn late, hot and tired after our flights from the West Coast. The first thing we do is unpack a swimsuit and cool off in the calm Caribbean a stone's throw away. We fall asleep to the sound of waves on the shore and awake the next morning to the sound of tanks being loaded on the boats and the muffled startup of the compressor. These are very welcome sounds; they signal we're on vacation, we're on Bonaire and we're going diving!

My group has been to Bonaire eight times. Why do we keep returning? For one thing, we love the intimate setting of Bruce's place. It feels like home. Bruce can accommodate only 26 guests in nine air-conditioned rooms surrounding the pool and a three bedroom, two bath house next door.

Everything at the Carib Inn is just steps from everything else yet all the essentials (except food) are here.

Seven of the nine guestrooms (and the house, of course) have fully equipped kitchenettes so you can eat some of your meals in (there's a grocery store nearby as well as several in town) and stretch your budget a bit. Bruce continually updates and improves the inn, this year the rooms have new curtains and linens and the pool, the resort's attractive centerpiece, has been refurbished. The deck has new concrete with old brick inlays and there are planters made from old Chicago brick.

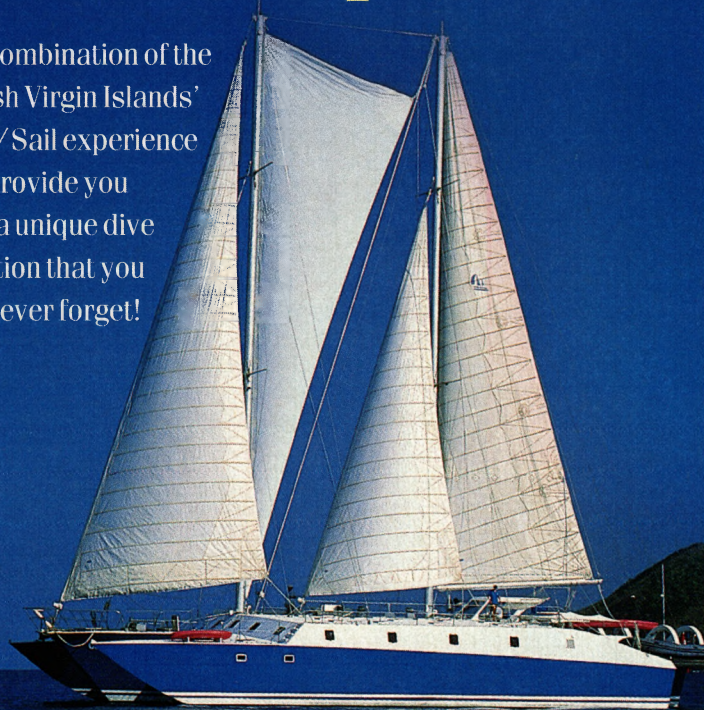


Above: Purple Stove-pipe Sponges are a Klein Bonaire hallmark. Below: Unloading the boats after the afternoon dive. The waters of the Caribbean Sea are warm, calm and clear.



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Photo: Jim Scheiner



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BRUCE BOWKER'S CARIB INN

The little dive shop across from the pool carries a surprisingly large inventory of dive gear, books and T-shirts—and the prices are excellent. That dive computer you've been considering probably costs less here than it did in the states. Just above the dive shop is a bright, air-conditioned classroom and audio/visual center, where the dive staff can teach you just about any PADI course or specialty or finish the certification class you began at home.

The Carib Inn's personnel are one of its greatest assets. They've been with Bruce for years. The instructor/boat captain team includes ten year veteran Kitty, who is also the Carib Inn's manager; Linda with seven years of service and JJ with six; Tessa, who's been there four years; and Ed, who has been there two. Keeping tanks filled and resort operations running smoothly are Richie Anthony, with 11 years of service, and Edward Thomas, with eight.

THE DIVING

The Carib Inn has two 25 foot boats (now powered by new 200 hp Yamaha outboards). Like most of the other operators on the island, Bruce runs a one tank trip in the morning and another in the afternoon. (Boat night dives are offered on request.) Unlike most other operators, however, his divemasters do not dictate your max depth and time for each dive—that's your decision. (See why we like him?) Also, the Carib Inn's boats leave one-half hour earlier than most the other boats so we almost always get the mooring we want (there's only one mooring at each dive site and only one boat can tie up to it).

Of course, the Carib Inn could have everything already listed and more—but if the diving wasn't special we wouldn't return year after year. Since most of us are from California, the water temperature is always an allure—it's 80°F year-round. Visibility averages 90 feet, we've never seen it less than 50. The air temperature averages 82°F year-round. Bonaire is a desert island, it gets only 22 inches of rain per year. The dry climate is another advantage: there's no uncomfortable humidity and bugs are only rarely a problem (after a rain, for instance). Also, there is no runoff to degrade visibility.

The waters around Bonaire and Klein Bonaire, one-quarter mile off the bigger island's western shore, have been a marine park for decades. All marine life from the mean high tide line down to 200 feet is protected. Thus, the waters teem with abundant fish and invertebrate life. And, since most of the ani-

SCUBA ACCESSORIES

SDM Editors Pick Items That Make Diving Safer, Easier and More Fun!

BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

EDITORS' PICK OF THE MONTH

RJE DIVE TRAK NAVIGATION

SYSTEM: Use the navigation system trailblazed and perfected by dolphins—sonar. The

Dive Trak system features a beacon and a receiver with a range of 750 feet. They are housed in high impact polycarbonate; each is positively buoyant, measuring a compact 6.75 by 2 inches. Both also have a user replaceable 9 volt alkaline or lithium battery. The line of sight system is simple to use and has many practical applications beyond finding your way back to the boat, such as marking artifacts or other objects, or keeping track of a dive buddy in low visibility. Dive Trak is available for \$499. For information on your nearest dealer, call (714) 833-8423. 🐠



BAIN DE SOLEIL LE SPORT SUNBLOCK: It is difficult to avoid the sun while diving so protection against it is essential. Bain de Soleil Le Sport sunblock with SPF level 30 is waterproof, sweatproof and rubproof for up to eight hours of protection from harmful UVA and UVB rays. The formulation is also hypoallergenic, light and nongreasy. Bain de Soleil products are available at most drug stores, prices vary. For more information, call (800) 723-7529. 🐠

INTELLIGENT SCUBA LR-800 U/W LIGHT: This powerful dynamo of a dive light is rechargeable, amazingly compact (6.75 by 2 inches) and made of super rugged 6000 series anodized aluminum. The LR-800 has a bright, 10 watt halogen lamp and features a folding pistol grip, three position, removable non-slip padded handle; when extended, the on/off switch is easily reached by the thumb. The high capacity nickel-cadmium battery is good for 750 hours (1.5 hours per charge) of burn time. The padded, waterproof case, charger and extra O-rings and bulb are all included for only \$235. For more information, contact Intelligent Scuba at (800) 407-6201. 🐠



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WITZ SHUTTER CASE: This sport case is perfect for stowing a compact camera while at the beach or on the boat. It has ultra soft padding and watertight seals to keep out damaging moisture and sand. The high impact ABS case is 2.5 by 3.5 by 6 inches; there is a three-quarter inch wide, adjustable nylon webbing carrying strap for comfortable portability. The Shutter Case sells for \$16. For information on your nearest dealer, call (800) 499-1568. 🐠



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imals have been seeing divers since birth, they are typically unafraid and thus easy to photograph.

While Bonaire's topside and underwater life may not remember us among all the divers they see every year, we know them. An all day trip to Washington-Slagbaai Park by rental minivan is always a highlight of our week on Bonaire. We love two special dive sites there, Boca Bartol and Playa Funchi.

At **Playa Funchi**, we were pleased to find the school of Trunkfish we first saw in 1990 are still there. They greet divers in inches of waters, right at the shore. This is the only spot I know of anywhere where you can get five or six Smooth Trunkfish (and possibly a filefish or other interloper) in one picture. Near the drop-off here I found a school of squid. Other fish I recorded in my log include a Honeycomb



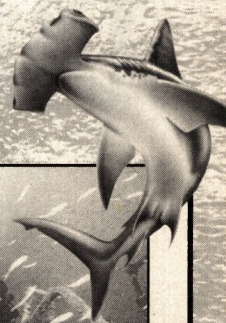
Bruce Bowker's staff has been with him for years. From left to right: Ed Diehl, Kitty Handschuh, Edward Thomas, Tessa Ley, Linda Baker. Last row: JJ Joslin and Bruce Bowker. Richie Anthony was camera shy.

Cowfish and a French Angel, which posed prettily in a coral encrusted crevice. When we open our lunch bags at Playa Funchi, the hills come alive with lizards. Comparing my photos from the various years, I realize we've known one, now quite large male iguana for several years. He now surveys the scene from the top of a cliff before coming down to beg for a handout.

Beach diving is certainly one of Bonaire's allures. You supplement your boat dives with it, usually parking just off the main road, entering the water through six inch surf and swimming about 25 yards before descending. The site right in front of the **Carib Inn** is quite productive for photography. On a night dive here I photographed an octopus

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BRUCE BOWKER'S CARIB INN

who had commandeered an empty beer can as part of its lair and a Scorpionfish whose large red eye looked deadly peering around a rock.

On my last trip Bruce took just six of us on a special night dive to **White Hole**, via inflatable. This large white sand bottomed sink hole is little visited because it's in the Lac Bay area, on the windward side of the island. The night scene was very exciting: two species of slipper lobster, a Measled Cowry with its mantle covering its shell, a seahorse, a couple of very large lobsters and a large grouper far into the reef were our photographic prey.

Our group always has both experienced and new divers; Bonaire offers something for everyone. The reefs slope gently to about 50 or 60 feet before dropping more steeply. The shallows, 30 to 50 feet, harbor a plenitude of photo subjects: lots of fish, crabs, eels, anemones with shrimp and the occasional seahorse and frogfish. Azure Vase, Purple Stove Pipe and Orange Elephant Ear Sponges are common, as are healthy gorgonians.

Late afternoon is a special time. Freshly showered after our last dive, we gather at the Carib Inn's cabaña on the waterfront for the cocktail hour. This is the perfect place to watch the sun set over calm waters while swapping dive stories and other lies. Bruce added a barbecue here a couple years ago but my admittedly lazy group prefers to eat supper out—and there are many very good restaurants from which to choose.

The cabaña is also the perfect setting for the free buoyancy control workshops Bruce teaches once a week.

CONCLUSION

Only 50 miles off the coast of Venezuela, Bonaire is easy to reach. ALM flies there from Miami (a three hour flight) and Atlanta; Air Aruba flies from Miami or Newark to Bonaire after a stop in Aruba. U.S. and Canadian citizens need only proof of citizenship and a photo I.D., as well as a continuing on ticket to enter the country. The airport departure tax is \$10; every dive operator also collects a \$10 annual fee from every diver, the money goes to maintain the marine park. English is widely spoken and American credit cards and dollars are accepted almost everywhere (you'll get change in guilders).

There is a downside to the Carib Inn—space is booked well in advance. For more information, call the Carib Inn direct at 011 (599) 7 8819 between 8:00 am and 5:30 pm (EST); fax to 011 (599) 7 5295 (24 hours a day) or send e-mail to caribinn@bonairenet.com.

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Lighthouse Reef

A Pristine Wilderness,
Jam-packed with
Spectacular Diving

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE



Top: Sunset ignites the sky. **Above:** Great wall diving is abundant and excellent visibility challenges your sense of distance.



Above: Lighthouse Reef Resort has the only accommodations on the atoll, ensuring a level of exclusivity above and below.



Let's dream a little dream together: You and I are looking for a dive adventure. What we want is a whole new area to explore and we want the best resort in that area. We would love to have an island all to ourselves (if that's still possible) but we don't want to live in a tent. We don't need shopping, gambling, nightclubs, etc., but we want to live comfortably and eat good food. We want a reliable dive operation and great diving. We want a memorable, affordable adventure and we don't want to travel halfway around the world to get it.

If you are sharing this dream, I have found the reality—Lighthouse Reef Resort, Belize. This comparatively remote, out-island retreat offers unforgettable, pristine diving and barefoot on the beach tropical living. The island even has its own airstrip. In short, Lighthouse Reef Resort is a modernized version of adventurous, Caribbean-like-it-used-to-be diving.

The diving and lifestyle at Lighthouse Reef Resort are so good that, quite frankly, I am surprised space is available there at any time. However, off the beaten track, it is simply not that well known worldwide. Though almost full during the summer months, there is space available during the winter, spring and fall.

Lighthouse Reef Atoll is known by experienced divers as one of the very best areas in the Caribbean. Before the establishment of Lighthouse Reef Resort, the only way you could get here was by boat from the mainland or from another island in between, a distance of many miles, much of it in open sea.

Lighthouse Reef is nearly 20 miles long and 4 to 6 miles wide (this atoll by itself is

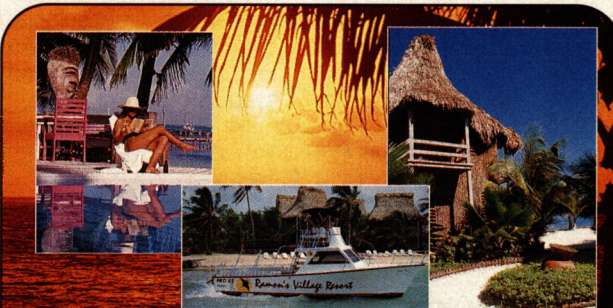
SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Lighthouse Reef Atoll is best known for:

- Half Moon Caye Wall
- Great Blue Hole
- Large sponge formations
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- Pristine environment

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1997 WEEKLY DIVE ITINERARY

Saturday Arrival in Belize City	Tuesday Lighthouse Atoll	Friday Southern Belize
Sunday Turneffe Atoll	Wednesday Lighthouse Atoll	Saturday Return to Belize City
Monday Lighthouse Atoll	Thursday Glovers Atoll	

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LIGHTHOUSE REEF RESORT

about the same size as many diving islands). It is roughly oval-shaped, surrounded by a nearly enclosed ring of coral reefs and a few sandy islands, with a shallow emerald lagoon on the inside. There are more than 50 miles of wilderness reefs and walls and hundreds of dive sites. All this and just one little dive resort at the northern tip.

Lighthouse Reef Resort is a charming retreat perched at the fringe of a white sand beach on palm crowded Northern Caye. The well-maintained private airstrip is just behind the resort. The property contains about 1,500 feet of beachfront, with seaside cottages nestled among palms. There are five cabañas and six villas. The cabaña interiors are all similar; the villas vary slightly in appointment and configuration. One villa, the beach suite, has a bar, kitchenette and living room with a separate bedroom and bath.

The social focus is a handsome Caribbean style mainhouse with a dock. Inside and extending to an outside deck and outdoor grill is the resort restaurant and bar. A second dock, to the west, reaches out from the dive shop and gift shop. The property extends over 15 acres of north facing beachfront and includes, according to a recent survey, nearly 500 coconut palms.

The self-contained resort features a complete dive operation with two mid-sized custom dive boats, cottage style living right on the beach and a restaurant that serves excellent food, featuring local seafood and combinations of island and continental cuisine.

The dive operation is run by instructors and local experts (there are 23 full time employees at the resort) out of a small but well equipped dive shop. The two dive vessels are a 30 foot custom vessel with an overhead and a 26 foot custom vessel with a flybridge. The dive schedule is flexible and normally combines morning and afternoon diving with one or two all day picnic dives.

As has been suggested, the potential dive area is extensive and nearly unlimited. The typical site is a shallow coral garden bordering a usually steep drop-off.

Only minutes from the resort dock is a site called the **Abyss**, a double lipped wall that begins in only 40 feet of water and extends beyond the limits of sport diving. Along the western side of the atoll, still close to the resort, are numerous spectacular wall dives. These include **Captain's Choice** and **Black Coral Forest**—two sites that feature beautiful combinations of cascading corals and intricate sponges. These western drop-offs

(Continued on Page 45)

DIVER'S CALENDAR

Get Wet Madness '97

The sixth annual Get Wet Madness Diving Festival will be held **August 1 to 4** in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada. There will be boat diving, a treasure hunt, various competitions, nitrox instruction, equipment trials, a photo competition and more.

For information, contact Jo's Dive Shop at (902) 634-3443, fax (902) 634-9466 or e-mail jodive@tallships.is tar.ca. 🐠

International Society of Aquatic Medicine

The 5th annual family meeting of ISAM will be held **August 2 to 9** at Plaza Resort Bonaire. Thirty hours of Category II CME credit will be available from the University of Tennessee, School of Medicine.

For information or reservations, contact Alan E. Thomas, M.D. at (910) 452-1452. 🐠

1997 Nikonos Shootouts

The always popular Nikonos Shootouts are scheduled for **August 8 to 17** in Key Largo, Florida and **September 13 to 20** on Curacao. The events are open to photographers of all levels and feature thousands of dollars in prizes.

For information, call WaterHouse Photo Tours at (800) 272-9122; fax (305) 452-2228 or e-mail phototours@aol.com. 🐠

Destination Diving

Destination Diving will be held **August 15 to 17** just outside the UnderWater World aquarium at Pier 39 in San Francisco, California. This event will feature a variety of booths, demonstrations and exhibits about the local marine life and environment. Exhibitors will also include manufacturers, destinations, dive shops and more. Admission is free.

For information, contact UnderWater World at (415) 623-5323; fax (415) 623-5324. 🐠

Dive Rescue Team Challenge

The Southern Kentucky Association of Public Safety Divers will sponsor the Dive Rescue Team Challenge **August 23 to 24** at Nolin Lake Reservoir, Edmonson County, Kentucky. An awards ceremony will follow the competition.

For information, contact Jeff Pearson at (502) 746-9478, Steve Woods at (502) 622-2057, Bob Sanborne at (502) 781-6437 or Jeff Thomas at (502) 651-6607; e-mail jmthomas@glasgow-ky.com. 🐠

Pearl Lake Specialty Course

Pearl Lake, South Beloit, Illinois, in cooperation with participating area dive shops, will offer an Underwater Archaeology Research Diver Specialty course and workshop **September 20**. The course will be conducted by David Cooper, an underwater archaeologist for the State of Wisconsin with Richard Boyd, Ph.D. Pre-registration prior to August 31 is required.

For information, contact Greg Kent at (414) 363-9874 or Pearl Lake at (815) 389-1479. 🐠

Diver's Safety Weekend

Southpoint Divers of Key West, Florida, will present the second annual Diver's Safety Weekend fundraiser **September 27 to 28**. The event includes a 5K run and various diver safety courses. Prizes will be given away.

For information, call (800) 891-DIVE, fax (305) 296-6888 or e-mail Southpoint@aol.com. 🐠

Titanic Exhibit in Memphis

The Memphis Pyramid will exhibit more than 300 artifacts recovered from the wreck of the *Titanic* through **September 30**.

For information, please call (800) 2-MEMPHIS. 🐠

Cayman Madness 1997

Bob Soto's Diving, Ltd. and Caribbean Dive Tours have teamed up again to offer divers another chance to experience a value packed "dive and party package" at '70s prices **September 11 through October 23**. Cayman Madness '97 is an eight day/seven night (Thursday through Thursday) dive vacation package that features a full program of activities, social events and chances to win hundreds of prizes. In addition to airfare and accommodations, the package price includes six days of diving, a dance, rum punch/steel band party, BBQ, U/W treasure hunt and cookout, free equipment test dives, free use of Nikonos V cameras and strobes and more. The event is limited to 150 divers per week.

For more information, call Caribbean Dive Tours at (800) 786-3483 or fax (770) 565-0129. 🐠

If you have a diving related event you would like to see included in our Calendar section, please send information via e-mail to:

sawyer@petersenpub.com

or fax (213) 782-2121



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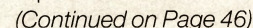
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The Tsunami Rangers love to watch water sports on OLN Monday and Thursday evenings.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

The computer incorporates an extended depth algorithm that will continue full operation down to 330 feet. However,



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Awesome wreck and reef diving! You'll never forget your dive on Theo's Wreck, an intact 230' freighter resting at the edge of a dramatic vertical wall.

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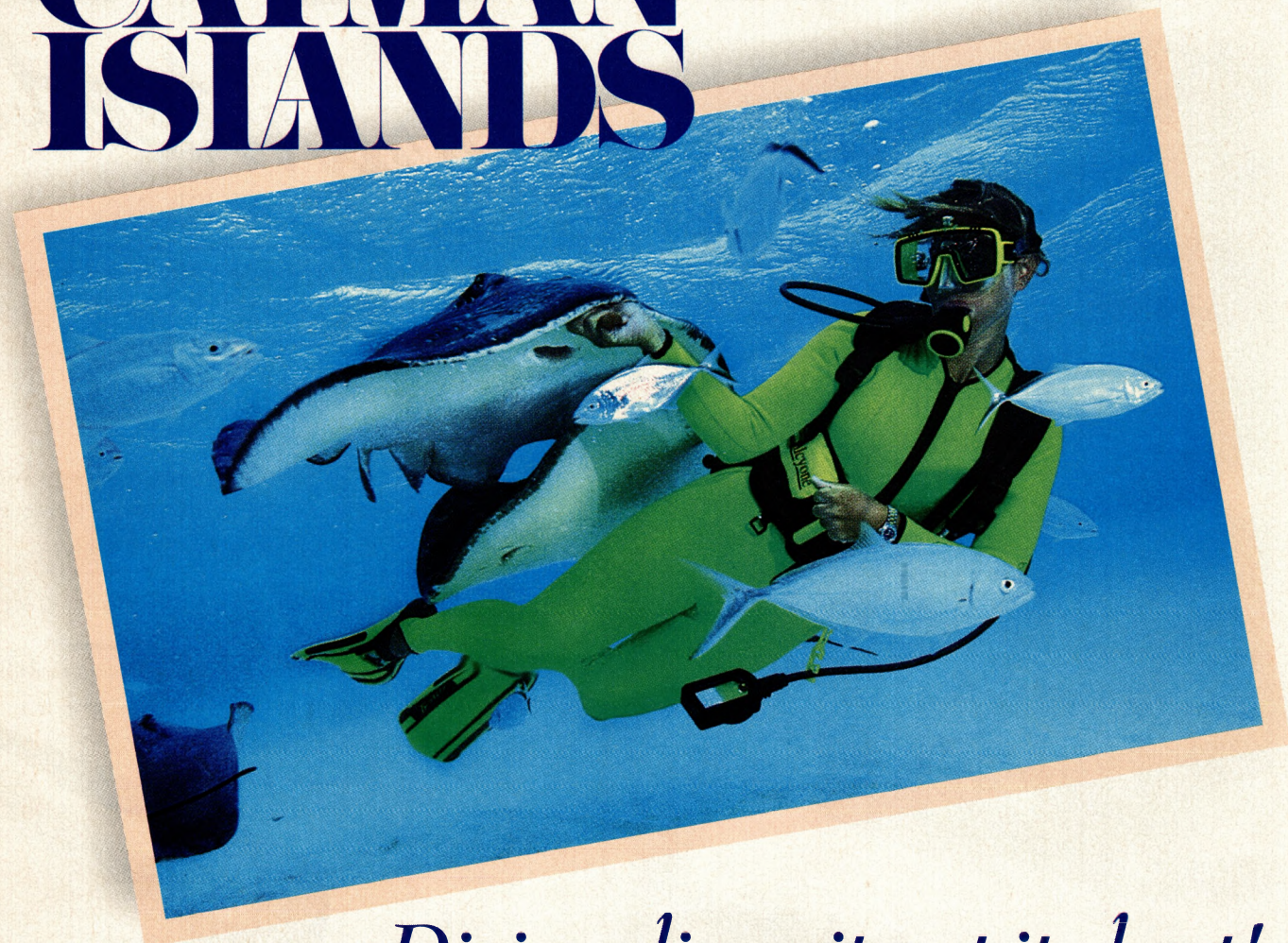
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Grand Bahama Island

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Fisheye Photo & Video, Grand Cayman

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Bob Soto's Diving, Ltd., Grand Cayman

"Bob Soto's Diving is the Cinderella story of resort diving services," according to *Skin Diver Magazine*. Cayman's only PADI 5 Star Development Center, Bob Soto's has more than 30 dive packages to choose from with preferential airfares, accommodations & dive options. Dive packages with accommodations, PP/DbI, start as low as \$299. Fly Cayman Airways, our national carrier. Complement superb Cayman diving with truly outstanding customer service. Repeat customers rate our dive experts #1 in friendly, professional service. It all starts with only One Call to our Reservations Hotline. 1-800-BOB SOTO. Fax: (345) 949-8731. E-mail: bobsotos@candw.ky



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Discover the island's most complete resort, centerpiece to world-class service and all that Grand Cayman has to offer. Located on the 90-acre Britannia golf club, this 236 deluxe room resort offers exclusive villas, private Beach Club, marina and public ferry to Rum Point Beach. Dive packages and an on-property water sports facility are available. Complete diving, snorkeling and water sports service through Red Sail Sports. Call 1-800-233-1234.



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The Caribbean the way it used to be - secluded and undisturbed. Step from your private oceanfront beach cottage onto one of our comfortable dive boats, *Coral Star* and *Coral Sun*. Experience Little Cayman with a maximum of ten (10) divers per boat. IANTD Nitrox facility - Learn Nitrox Here. Res/info: (800) 899-CLUB (2582) E-mail: scc@candw.ky home page: <http://scubacentral.com/scc.html>.



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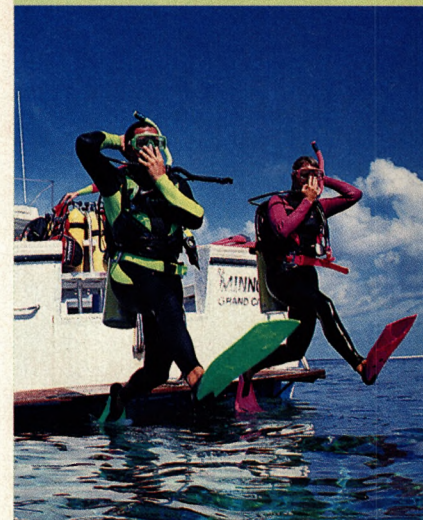
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Almond Beach Hideaways, Cayman Brac

Unspoiled Cayman Brac's newest deluxe accommodations—designed by divers for divers. Spacious two-bedroom villas, fully-equipped, air conditioned, on a secluded, palm-shaded, white sand beach. Dive our spectacular coral reefs just steps from your door! Superb dive vacation values start at only \$638 per person. Includes 7 night villa lodging and 5 days of world class diving on the colorful reefs and sheer dropoffs of the Brac and Little Cayman. Free brochure. Call 1-800-972-9795, fax 541-426-4863.



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Bob Soto's Diving Ltd.	(800) BOB SOTO
Calico Jacks	(345) 949-4373
Capitol's Surfside	(800) 543-6828
Capt. Marvin's	(345) 945-4590
Cayman Aggressor III	(800) 348-2628
Cayman Dive College	(345) 949-4125
Cayman Diving Lodge	(800) TLC-DIVE
Cayman Diving School	(345) 949-4729
Cayman Marine Lab	(345) 945-5586
Celebrity Divers	(345) 949-3410
Clint Ebanks Scuba	(345) 949-3873
Crystal Clear Divers	(345) 949-3730
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Dive 'n Stuff	(345) 949-6033
Dive Time Pirates Inn	(345) 947-2339
Divers Down	(345) 945-1611
Don Foster's	(800) 833-4837
Eden Rock Diving	(345) 949-7243
Fisheye of Cayman	(800) 887-8569
Indies Divers	(800) 654-3130
Neptune's Realm	(345) 949-6444
Ocean Frontiers	(800) 544-6576
Off The Wall Divers	(345) 947-7790
Ollen Miller	(345) 947-6606
Parrots Landing	(800) 448-0428
Peter Milburn	(345) 945-5770
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Quabo Dives	(345) 945-4769
Red Sail Sports	(800) 255-6425
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Seven Mile Watersports	(345) 949-0332
Soto's Cruises	(345) 945-4576
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Sunset Divers	(800) 854-4767
Tortuga Divers Ltd.	(800) 748-8733
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Reef Divers	(800) 327-3835

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Pirate's Point	(345) 948-1010
Reef Divers	(800) 327-3835
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Southern Cross Club	(800) 899-2582

Red Sail Sports, Grand Cayman

Diving is at its best with Red Sail Sports, now at three exciting locations (Hyatt and Westin on Seven Mile Beach and Rum Point on the north side of the island). Daily dive trips visit spectacular walls, reefs, and wrecks aboard custom dive boats boasting freshwater showers, restrooms, rinse tanks and more. Our scuba school offers a wide range of courses. Accessible for handicapped divers. Wide variety of packages including accommodations at the Hyatt, Westin, Grand Pavilion & Christopher Columbus Condominiums. Two new packages now available at Rum Point - Cayman Kai Resort and The Retreat condominiums. Call about our amazing fall special package - September through December. Reservations 1-800-255-6425.

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Indies Suites/Indies Divers, Grand Cayman

INDIES DIVERS offers a highly-personalized service on two custom-built dive boats serving the North and West Walls and Stingray City. 12-diver maximum, camera tables, video and photo services and illustrated dive briefings. Located at INDIES SUITES — Cayman's only all-suites dive hotel. Accommodation/dive packages available. Call 1-800-654-3130.

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Brac Aquatics & Brac Caribbean, Cayman Brac

Brac Aquatics, the island's oldest & most experienced dive operator, has teamed up with Cayman Brac's newest & by far finest full service luxury resort. We dive a vast variety of spectacular sites, including Little Cayman your way! Our prices & services will spoil you forever! Call for unbelievable packages & prices in hotels, villas, condos & private homes. Or, try the ultimate, LITTLE CAYMAN DIVER II, a former 90 foot mega-yacht. Very personalized with only 10 divers maximum in 5 cabins, each with private head & shower. BRAC AQUATICS, P.O. Box 273781, Tampa, FL 33688-3781. Or call: 1-800-544-2722; 813-962-2236 or Fax: 813-264-2742.

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Villas of the Galleon, Grand Cayman

Villas of the Galleon Condominiums has received the top rating of "Excellent" by the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism for the second year in a row. Our condos are well appointed, Daily Maid Service except on Sunday. All units are fully equipped, Central A/C, T/V, Patios or Balconies. Each unit has a view of the renowned Seven Mile Beach. We offer 1, 2, and 3 bedroom condos. Perfect vacation spot for everyone whether you are on your honeymoon, a family reunion, singles, groups, we have the right condo for you. For more information call your travel agent or 345-945-4433 or fax 345-945-4705.

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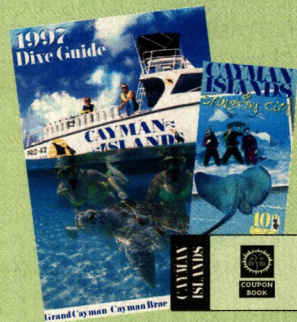
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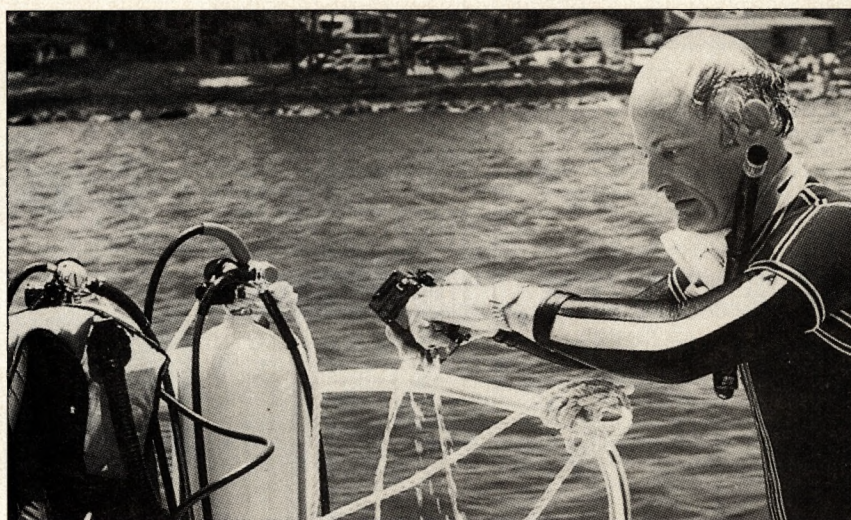
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Saving Your Flooded Nikonos V

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BOB WARKENTIN



Since the Nikonos V is a mechanical camera with electronics, it can still be used on M90 if serviced promptly after a flood. Above: The first step is always to dump out any saltwater!

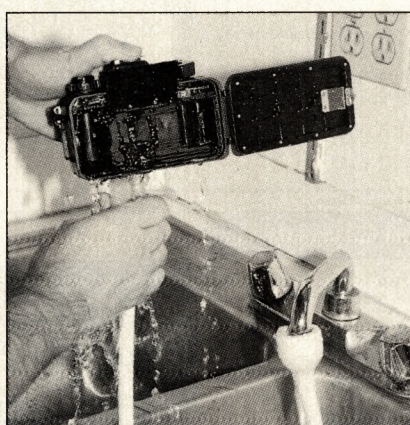
Milliseconds after water (any amount from just a few droplets to a flood) hits the electronics of your Nikonos V they're fried. Fortunately, this isn't an electronic camera, it's a mechanical camera with electronics. If the electronics are shot, you can still set it on M90 and take "the world's greatest pictures."

After a flood, you generally have an hour or so (remove the batteries immediately) to try and save the wet metal mechanical parts. Your chances are vastly improved if you have a hair dryer.

PREPARATION: Remove the lens, battery cap, four screws and plastic cover over the electronics chamber and fire the camera (do not re-cock!) to close the rear shutter blades. If they are stuck open, hold the camera by the door hinge, hold down the shutter release button and strike the bottom of the camera on the palm of your other hand. If the rear blades won't close they may not be rinsed effectively.

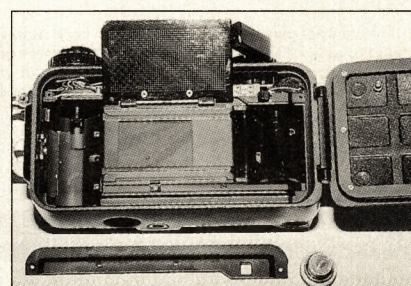
HOSE FLUSHING: Never totally submerge or turn the camera upside down under a faucet to flush/rinse the main chamber; water can enter the viewfinder, which can't be serviced in the field. Keep the camera body upright with the back door open during flushing operations: Use a flexible garden or faucet hose with an orifice equal to or larger than the diameter of the battery compartment. (If the orifice is too small, water drains without entering the camera. So, cut a hole in the bottom of a film canister, slide the small hose inside and, presto, you have a larger orifice. Hold it tightly against the battery compartment opening and, with your palm over the lens opening, turn on the water (two to three minutes): The fresh water simply fills the inside, leaving no air pockets, and pushes saltwater out. (Note: Since alcohol or other liquids cause damage, never use them!)

PAN FLUSHING: Pan flushing is not as



effective as hose flushing but is better than nothing. Set the camera upright, door open, in a quart pan. Slowly fill the pan until the water level just equals the top of the main electronics. Once all bubbling (air pockets) stops, lift out the camera and drain the water into the pan. Repeat this process, then dump the pan water. Repeat this cycle three more times. Don't shake the camera while it's in the pan of water. If you have distilled water, use it for the final flush.

DRYING: After you've poured out all the water, you must dry the camera immediately; water left will rust metal! Whether professionally disassembled or rinsed in a pan, the drying of the watch-like parts can only be done safely and thoroughly by controlled evaporation. It cannot be done with high pressure air from a scuba tank; diesel oil fumes in a hot engine room; moist salt air on a sunny boat deck; or in an oven set on "warm." Above 33°F, liquid water slowly turns to water vapor. Increasing temperature/airflow gradually increases evaporation rate. Controlled evaporation slowly and safely warms the wet metal and plastic parts in a Nikonos. The water becomes water vapor, which rises from every crack and



Left: Flushing with fresh water removes the saltwater. Hold the camera upright, with the backdoor open. Above: This is drying position one; with the backdoor open and the shutter release holding up the film plate.


crevice and is removed by the continuous flow of warm air from the hair dryer.

I've found a two speed 1,200 watt hair dryer works best. I use the lowest warm setting and hold it at least 12 inches from the camera. (If your hair dryer is hotter, you'll have to figure distance, setting and times yourself!) Place a small cardboard box sideways and set the camera at the mouth of the open box. This results in twice the flow of warm air (in and then out) for the time invested. Warm for 10 to 15 minutes as follows:

1. Camera face down, base facing dryer, door open and film plate held up (using the tip of the film advance lever).
2. Camera upright, back facing dryer, open as above.
3. Camera upright, lens opening facing dryer, open as above.

Now, mechanically operate (if possible) the camera, checking first for signs of moisture (if found, repeat each drying position another five minutes). Cool for five to ten minutes, then use a dummy roll of film and run it through twice to check all the film transport mechanics. Add batteries and repeat.

Now you must worry about why your flood happened! 🐡



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Divers use different muscles in the down kick and the up kick portions of the kick cycle. In the down kick (power stroke) the spoon channels water to the center for maximum thrust and reduces side slip and fluttering. In the up kick the large side ribs stabilize the fins, yet allow the specially-shaped fin tips to flex. This flexing reduces the effort needed to return the fins to the beginning of the power stroke.

3. Compound Rib Insets

Another innovation can be seen on the underside of the Idea³ fin. The unique hollow ribs are filled with a highly elastic rubber compound. The rubber acts as an internal spring to add energy to the power stroke without the penalty of high weight.

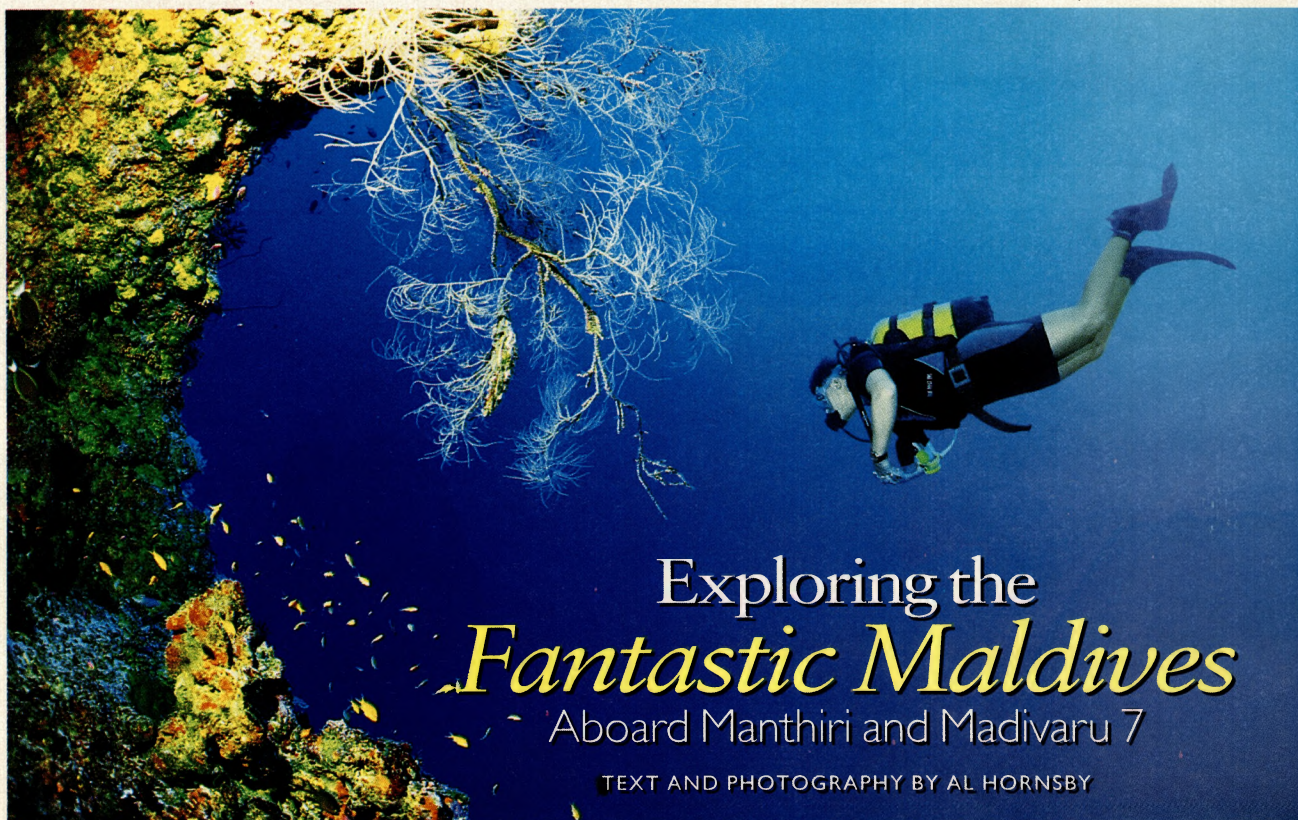
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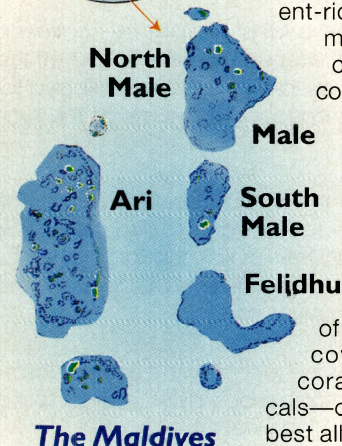
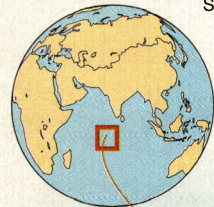
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The ocean is flat, calm and blue; the cobalt sky is lightly dusted with white powder puffs of cloud. In every direction, small islets crowned with coconut palms sit only a few feet above the waterline. The water below is crystalline, revealing jumbled reefs in the pink and fawn pastels of living corals. This is the tropical sea of your imagination, unspoiled and remote. This isn't imagination, however, it's very real, indeed. It's the Maldives.



In the warm Indian Ocean, the Maldives chain is a 500 mile long stretch of coral atolls, 26 in all, that dot an otherwise smooth, featureless sea. More than 1,000 islands, each surrounded by clear nutrient-rich waters, form a vast, living marine world that is unique in its complexity, diversity and vibrant collection of marine species.

Especially for the underwater photographer, the Maldives' qualities—very clear water; long periods of glassy seas; big animals, such as mantas, sharks, turtles and Napoleon Wrasse; miles and miles of intricate, healthy coral reefs covered by hard corals, soft corals and clouds of reef tropicals—combine to give it its rank as best all-around in the world of dive destinations.

The Maldives have long been a favorite of Europeans, with diving centered around some 80 small resorts, each on its own private island, that are scattered throughout the archipelago. For the more adventurous, there has also been a fleet of economy live-aboards, with bunk-style accommodations, limited water and few of the amenities and dive services Americans are used to.

Top: Crowded walls, packed with fish and invertebrates, are a Maldives hallmark. Below: A Blue-faced Angelfish.



That has all changed recently, however, with two live-aboards providing a degree of service and comfort to rival live-aboards anywhere. They also have an extended range to access an area spread over hundreds of miles, visiting exotic, seldom dived atolls that are absolutely pristine, true marvels of nature's handiwork.

MANTHIRI

A favorite of Maldives divers for the past three years, the *Manthiri* just underwent a complete refurbishing and expansion. The 85 foot craft, stable and fully air-conditioned, was already a comfortable, efficient dive vessel but the addition of a huge salon and upper sundeck has made it even more so.

The six cabins—four twins and two doubles—are large, each with private bath and independently controlled air-conditioning. A crew of ten provides a surprising degree of service. Meals are healthy, with excellently prepared American and local foods (the tuna curry, one of the staples of Maldivian cooking, is outstanding) in

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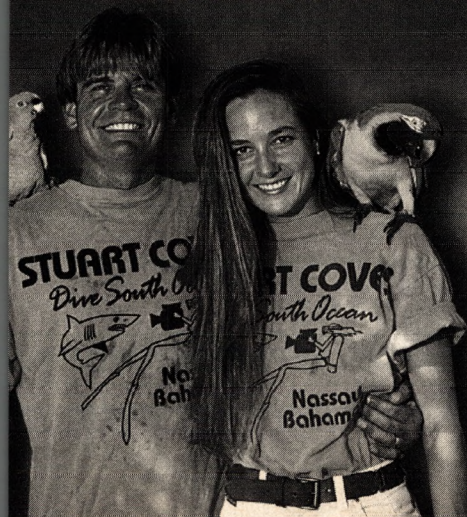
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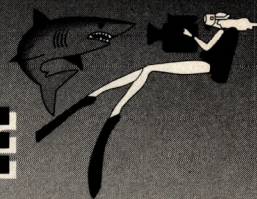
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THE FANTASTIC MALDIVES

copious amounts. While you're not eating, sleeping or diving, there are videos, Indian television and a small library, all available in the salon, which has couches, chairs and tables that are also used for camera assembly. Electric power is available in both 110 and 220 volts.

Two PADI divemasters supervise the diving; Ahmed Manik, *Manthiri's* head divemaster, is one of the Maldives' most knowledgeable guides, having explored

the islands' reef systems for many years. *Manthiri's* standard charters are ten days long.

MADIVARU 7

The newest boat serving the Maldives is the *Madivaru 7*. Built in distinctive Maldivian style, it is a comfortable, 100 foot long vessel with eight independently air-conditioned cabins, each with a double bunk below and single above, and private bath. Intricate woodworking throughout the ship creates an attractive, luxurious atmosphere.

The cozy salon has dining tables, tele-

vision/VCR and soft couches. Meals are served buffetstyle, with European (especially Italian), American and local cuisine. On the expansive main deck, there's plenty of room for sunbathing or shaded relaxation under a canopy; a large camera prep and storage table and E-6 processing system occupy the center.

Like *Manthiri*, *Madivaru 7* is designed for the American market and has both 110 and 220 volt electricity in each cabin. A crew of seven provides a level of service that compares with the world's finest live-aboards. Diving is supervised by the ship's chief, Salvo Cacciola, and two PADI instructors, Danielo Bergoni and Tim Cole. Charters are either 10 or 14 days long.

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The 100 foot Madivaru 7.



The 85 foot Manthiri.

Both *Manthiri* and *Madivaru 7* conduct diving from local *dhoni* craft. Each diver has an under the seat basket for dive gear, which stays on the *dhoni* throughout the trip. A crew of three on each *dhoni* helps set up gear and gets divers in and out of the water.

DIVING THE MALDIVES

Both ships dive similar areas, covering a circuitous route chiefly through the southern Maldives, extending more than 250 miles. Dives are normally conducted at Male, South Male, Vavu, Felidhoo, Vattaru, Rasdoo and Ari Atolls, with special visits to distant Muloc Atoll and Baa in the north. Because of the vast area dived, there are literally hundreds of sites.

One fantastic spot is called **Embudoo Express**. The dive starts on a sloping outer reef face, where pelagics—especially big tuna—cruise back and forth. Eagle Rays are frequently seen and, like most Maldives sites, turtles, completely unafraid of divers, are practically everywhere. At the point of a huge channel,

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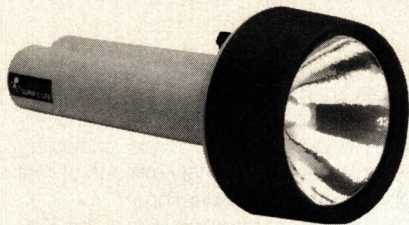
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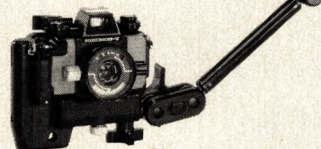
The Super C-Lite series lites are six cell versions of the indestructible Mini C-Lites. These small lightweight lights provide very high intensity. The feature a unique folding switch with lock. A stainless steel clip is provided for easy attachment to any belt.

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Modular design affords easy conversion of this hand-held dive lite into a video cinema light.

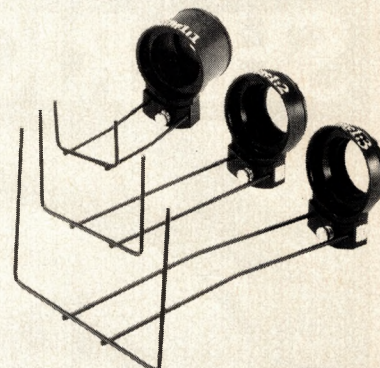


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VIDEO-LITE 45

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THE FANTASTIC MALDIVES

divers encounter Whitetips and Gray Reef Sharks, then ride the brisk current up the channel for several miles, passing overhangs loaded with soft corals, schooling Sweetlips and seemingly millions of reef tropicals of every description.

A unique inner lagoon dive is the **Ka-simo Wreck**, named for the fishing boat that lies on a 70 foot sand bottom next to a cylindrical *thila* (bommie) that rises straight to the surface. Caves and overhangs riddle the *thila*'s sides and are home to Longnosed Hawkfish, lionfish and many different species of angelfish, butterflyfish and triggerfish. A resident school of Batfish hovers over the wreck and, at one side of the *thila*, a field of hundreds of blue anemones creates a fairyland scene.

Another of the Maldives' very special dives is **Manta Point**, on distant Ari Atoll. At the end of the channel that spills over the wall at the edge of the lagoon, a soft coral covered slope falls into the depths. Huge schools of Surgeonfish and jacks mill about and, especially in the spring months, Mantas congregate, swooping and soaring as they feed on plankton carried through the channel.

GETTING THERE

The Maldives are reached from Los Angeles via either Singapore Airlines or Malaysian Airlines, connecting through Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, respectively. For complete information on diving the *Manthiri* or *Madivaru 7*, contact Tropical Adventures Travel, 111 2nd North, Seattle, WA 98109; (800) 247-3483 or (206) 441-5431 (fax).

Arguably, the Maldives' best dive is at the outer edge of a channel, a place called **Gurardhoo Kandu**. The outside slope of the reef, covered with hard corals and pockets of gorgonians, drops steeply away. Turtles and very tame Napoleon Wrasse allow divers to come in close and at the point of the channel, at 90 feet, there's a shark watching spot that rivals any in the world. Gray Reefs and Whitetips patrol back and forth and a resident school of gregarious Eagle Rays provides an opportunity for dramatic photographs. Around the point, the current sweeps in and the dive is finished with a swift ride past the channels' sides. Grottos and caves are thick with thousands of soft corals and swarms of schooling fish—what a dive!

With all this, the Maldives are undoubtedly one of the great dive destinations in the world. And now, with *Manthiri* and *Madivaru 7* extending an invitation to American divers, there's no excuse; don't miss the fantasy that is the Maldives.

LIGHTHOUSE REEF RESORT

(Continued from Page 30)

often begin in only 25 to 40 feet of water.

Two exceptional breaks from the usual program occur weekly, weather permitting. The first is an afternoon tour of scenic Sandbore Caye, only minutes away by small boat. Sandbore has a small population of a few salty Belizean fishermen and a lighthouse keeper. The 80 foot steel frame lighthouse offers a breathtaking view of the island and the lagoon.

A very special outing is the picnic day on Halfmoon Caye at the southern end of the atoll. We first stopped at the **Great Blue Hole**, the world's largest ocean hole, nearly 800 feet in diameter and more than 400 feet deep. Inside, beneath the lip of the hole at a depth of 110 to 130 feet, is a field of stalactites, some 30 feet long. Later, we dived a special site on the outside of **Halfmoon Caye Wall**, an area known to have some of the best wall diving in the entire Caribbean. In more than 150 feet of visibility we swam through coral labyrinths decorated with every shape and color of sponge imaginable.

After lunch, we visited the frigate and booby bird sanctuary at the western end of Halfmoon Caye. In the afternoon, on our way back, we stopped for a dive at **Silver Caves**. Here we photographed huge Barracuda and a very cooperative Hawksbill Turtle that stayed with us for nearly 15 minutes.

A Lighthouse Reef adventure begins with a direct flight to Belize from several U.S. gateways aboard a TACA 767 or



737 Boeing jet. From Belize International you will fly directly to the resort via Maya Airways. The usual stay is a one week, Saturday to Saturday dive filled package, including three meals a day.

For information or reservations, call (800) 423-3114, (941) 439-6600, fax (941) 439-6667 or e-mail LARC1@worldnet.att.net.

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OCEANIC'S DATATRANS PLUS

(Continued from Page 32)

transmitter, as a stand alone unit without air integration.

NITROX COMPATIBILITY: The DataTrans Plus can be used as an air computer or nitrox computer (thus the "Plus" in its name), so it's the computer for everyone. You select the mode of operation before you dive, either choosing Air or a numerical value for the percentage of oxygen in your nitrox mixture (between 21 and 50 percent).

When operating in Air mode, the DataTrans Plus makes its calculations at the 21 percent oxygen level (normal air). However, it will not display any oxygen related data or warnings. When the computer is set for a specific oxygen percentage (even 21 percent), it will display oxygen related information, which includes an oxygen loading bar graph and any applicable warnings.

When planning a dive after one where the oxygen percentage was set greater than 21, you must reset the percentage to the current level. Otherwise, the DataTrans Plus defaults to an oxygen setting of 50 percent, which results in very conservative limits. Again, this computer just has your safety in mind.

HIGH ALTITUDE VERSATILITY: The

DataTrans Plus can be used at any altitude between sealevel and 14,000 feet. (Above 14,000 feet, the computer can't be activated. You will only receive a Too High warning.) Between 2,000 and 14,000 feet, the computer automatically adjusts its calculations for reduced no decompression and oxygen exposure times and figures your depths in fresh water instead of saltwater. To ensure proper adjustment to altitude and

USER COMMENTS

Safety: "It's comforting to know the DataTrans Plus constantly monitors every facet of your dive day for safety and you can see the progression of such variables as tissue loading, oxygen accumulation and breathing gas time remaining on the bar graphs."

Personal adjustment: "I especially like that you can set your own alarm points for maximum depth and breathing gas reserve."

time for self-diagnostics, the DataTrans Plus should be activated above the water. As a safety feature, it can't be activated when submerged deeper than four feet.

CUSTOM DISPLAYS AND ALARMS: At the time of activation, you can alter the DataTrans Plus displays. You can set the

time and date and select the depth and tank pressure to be shown in meters and bars, or feet and psi. You can also set the alpha displays for English, Italian, German, Spanish or French. At this same time, you can set your personal alarm points for maximum depth and breathing gas reserve.

The DataTrans Plus is set at the factory to display ambient temperature, elapsed dive time and maximum depth continuously during diving. You can turn this Alternate Display off, so these values appear only when you press a button.

DECOMPRESSION MODEL: The DataTrans Plus makes its calculations based on a modified Haldanean algorithm with 12 theoretical tissue compartments. This computer model is actually more conservative than the U.S. Navy tables at maximum limits but extended bottom times become available because of the calculation of a multi-level profile. For maximum safety, the calculations and displays correspond to the "tissue" currently having the most critical nitrogen saturation.

DISPLAY: The DataTrans Plus offers an incredible amount of information, which appears in the high contrast LCD window in various modes. This information is displayed in large, easy to read numerals and alpha characters, highlighted by unique icons. When diving in low light

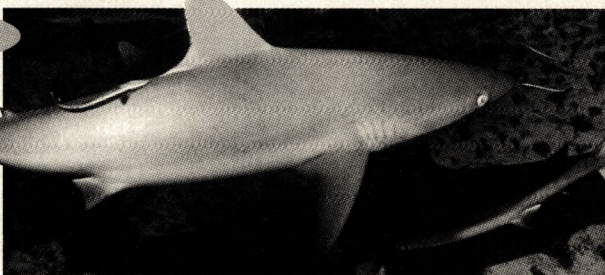
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	7 dive days	\$2,004	\$1,860
TELITA			
Papua New Guinea	11 dive days	\$3,249	N/A
PARADISE SPORT			
Papua New Guinea	7 nights	N/A	\$1,840
	8 nights	N/A	\$2,146
	10 nights	N/A	\$2,376

conditions, the window can be backlit at the press of a button. This Oceanglo backlight evenly illuminates the entire display.

GRAPHIC DIVER INTERFACE: Around the perimeter of the display window are five sequences of color coded bands (green for safe, yellow for caution, red for danger). Combined with small bars or triangles that appear in the LCD window beside these color bands, this creates the Graphic Diver Interface. As these bars or triangles increase in number, filling around the perimeter from green to yellow to red, the diver can tell at a glance how the dive is progressing with regard to several important variables.

TISSUE LOADING BAR GRAPH: Extending around the upper left corner of the display in a clockwise direction is the patented Tissue Loading Bar Graph. As your most critical theoretical "tissue" fills with nitrogen, small bar segments fill around the corner, graphically indicating this nitrogen accumulation and, correspondingly, the relative no decompression time remaining. If the bar segments are allowed to reach into the red Deco zone, you are in a decompression situation and the DataTrans Plus display alters accordingly.

OXYGEN ACCUMULATION BAR GRAPH: When you dive with a selected percentage of oxygen (nitrox) from 21 to 50, the

DataTrans Plus also displays the Oxygen Accumulation Bar Graph (patent pending). This runs up the right side of the display and across the top in a counter-clockwise direction. As bar segments fill this zone, you can track the concentration of oxygen accumulating (theoretically) in our body. This can be for the current dive only or show the build-up from more than one dive in a 24 hour period.

BREATHING GAS TIME REMAINING BAR GRAPH: Running along the bottom of the display window from right to left is the patented Breathing Gas Time Remaining Bar Graph. As bar segments fill this area, you can instantly see the approximate amount of dive time you have remaining as limited by your current breathing rate and pre-determined reserve.

Of course, the DataTrans Plus also shows the dive time remaining numerically but this number will be the shortest available (the most critical) among nitrogen loading, oxygen accumulation and breathing time. Appearing with this number will be the corresponding icon: a small clock above a wavy line and, below that, either a dive profile (nitrogen) or a scuba tank (breathing gas). If oxygen controls the calculations, nothing will appear under the wavy line but O2 will show to the right of the time remaining.

VARIABLE ASCENT RATE INDICATOR: On the lower right side of the display is the

patented Variable Ascent Rate Indicator. Small triangles fill this zone from green to yellow to red as ascent rate increases, with red indicating anything over the maximum of 60 feet per minute. Upon reaching the red area, the triangles will flash as a warning.

BREATHING GAS CONSUMPTION INDICATOR: During the first 70 seconds of a dive, the DataTrans Plus monitors your breathing rate and establishes this as a standard for comparison throughout the rest of the dive (patented). Thereafter, as your breathing gas consumption increases or decreases, it will be graphically illustrated at the bottom left of the display window on the Breathing Gas Consumption Indicator. (Small triangles fill from green to yellow to red.)

SURFACE MODE: When the DataTrans Plus is activated, it goes thorough a self-diagnostic check. Assuming it has been linked to the transmitter and the scuba tank valve is open, it will then move into Surface Mode. Here it will display the tank pressure numerically, depth (00), temperature, time and surface time. It will also display separate low battery warnings for either the transmitter or computer.

By pressing the two blue buttons in correct sequences, you can move through several other modes, including FO2, Plan, Log, History, Set and External Access.

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OCEANIC'S DATATRANS PLUS

FO2: In this mode you make your breathing gas selection, either Air or a percentage of oxygen from 21 to 50.

PLAN: In this mode the computer scrolls the depth and time limits for the current mixture, nitrogen loading and oxygen accumulation. These are shown for depths from 30 to 160 feet (or less) in ten foot increments.

Log: In the Log Mode you can view important data from your 12 most recent dives, including dive number, date and time of dive and all the other pertinent data, including nitrogen loading and oxygen accumulation.

HISTORY: The History Mode offers a summary of all your diving with the computer, including the total number of dives, total number of decompression dives, total elapsed dive time, deepest maximum depth and total number of violation dives.

SET: In this mode you adjust all your settings, such as time, date, alternate display, units of measure, alarm points, link code and language.

EXTERNAL ACCESS: Using the optional Oceanlog infrared hardware and software, in this mode you can download data from dives in your log to a PC.

No DECOMPRESSION DIVING: When you

descend to a depth below five feet, the DataTrans Plus switches to No Decompression Diving Mode. Your scuba tank pressure will be displayed numerically along with your current depth and dive time remaining. All five graphic displays will activate, filling with triangles or bars as the dive progresses and ascents and breathing rates are tracked. As mentioned, if the alternate display was switched on, temperature, elapsed dive time and maximum depth will also be shown. If not, these can be viewed by pressing a button.

Should you approach decompression or another dangerous situation, the computer will alert you with a variety of audible and visual warnings. In addition to other indicators, the most serious situations result in flashing message box warnings that are hard to miss. These include Violation, Gas Alarm, Exceeded Ceiling, Too Fast (ascent) and Too Deep. Should you find yourself in a situation where more than one of these warnings could be displayed, the computer will show the most urgent, in the hierarchy above.

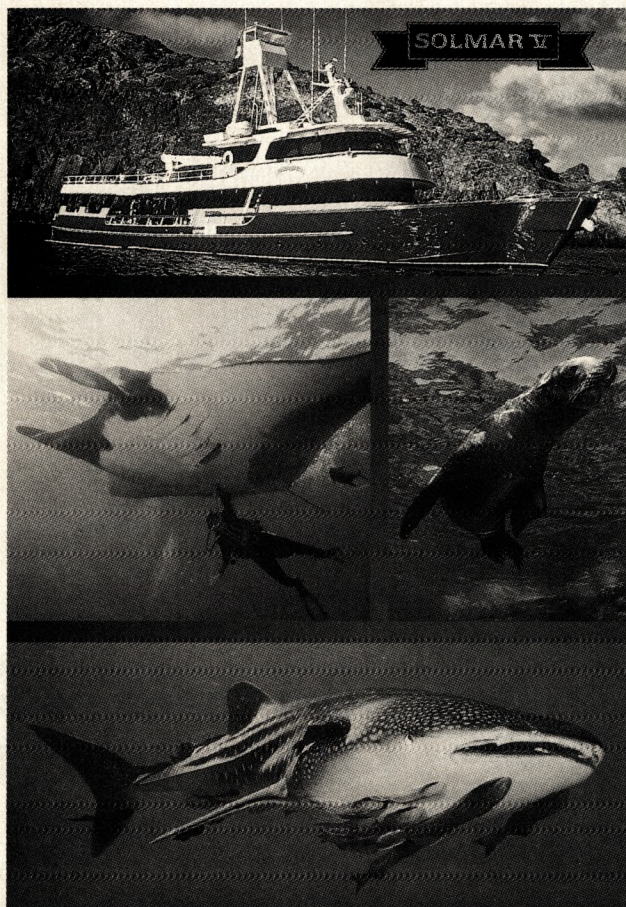
When major deviations from safe profiles occur, there are several levels of Violation Mode (when the computer is unable to predict ascent procedures). The most serious of these is Gauge Mode, where the computer can offer no

decompression or oxygen monitoring features for 24 hours.

DECOMPRESSION DIVING: Should you accidentally find yourself exceeding the no decompression limits, the DataTrans Plus will switch to Decompression Mode and guide you safely to the surface. Graphic displays continue to be shown, as do breathing gas and depth. Remaining dive time is now total ascent time, which includes all stop times required. Also displayed will be the next stop depth and time required there. These alternate with a Ceiling warning.

RETURN TO SURFACE: When you ascend above a depth of three feet, the DataTrans Plus enters Surface Mode. If you descend within ten minutes, it is considered part of the previous dive. After ten minutes at the surface, the computer displays surface interval time. The tissue loading and oxygen accumulation bar graphs will be shown along with temperature and time of day. All the surface accessed modes are available, including Time to Fly. Twelve hours after the last dive, Surface Mode will disappear and Time to Fly will be displayed continuously for the next 12 hours, at which time the computer turns off.

CONCLUSION: The DataTrans Plus offers an incredible level of personalized dive control, all with your safety as its first



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concern. This information is clearly displayed and procedures can be quickly learned following the well illustrated, comprehensive manual. If you're in the market for the cutting edge in dive computers, the DataTrans Plus deserves your careful consideration. It has a suggested retail price of \$925. The optional Oceanlog hardware/software is \$175. The computer has a two year limited warranty requiring an annual inspection. For more information, contact your nearest Oceanic dealer or Oceanic USA, 2002 Davis Street, San Leandro, CA 94577-1211; (510) 562-0500 or fax (510) 569-5404. On the Internet, contact <http://www.oceanicusa.com>.

Dive Notes

MIAMI BEACH'S UNDERWATER THEME PARK: South Florida has 34 artificial reefs offshore and is the capital of recreational diving. Sharks in the shadows of a coral covered oil rig, Barracuda floating in a pile of radio towers, angelfish in the barrel of a 60 ton tank—these are some of the present attractions in South Florida's growing underwater theme park.

The park, ranging in depth from 30 to

200 feet, has added another attraction—a Miami Beach water tower. The City of Miami Beach water tower, originally on the southeastern corner of Alton Road and First Street, made the plunge in June, one and a half miles offshore 44th Street and Collins Avenue.

The re-use of the tower as an artificial reef is an innovative way to recycle the structure. It offers significant potential marine recreation and tourism benefits to Miami Beach. Based on this potential, the Florida Department of Environmental protection (FDEP) awarded a \$45,000 grant for the construction of the reef project. In addition, local business and watersport interests, such as the Greater Miami Billfish Tournament, the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce and DERM, pledged to donate an additional \$42,000 for the project.

The Miami Beach water tower was built in the late 1920s and used to boost water pressure in the southern portion of the city. The tower was permanently taken out of service in 1991.

The Beyel Brothers Crane and Rigging Company constructed and deployed the water tower as an artificial reef at a cost of \$87,000. It also provided a 200 foot ship to erect and sink the water tower. The artificial reef was constructed with the grant funds and donations.

REEF WATCHERS HAWAII: Professional dive and snorkel tour guides, Casey Mahaney and Astrid Witte, have designed a pocket sized field guide with text and layout to make fish and marine critter identification affordable, informative and fun. Called *Reef Watchers Hawaii*, it uses laymen's terms to describe each marine life family briefly in regard to behavior, feeding habits and natural history. The reader will find it easy to look up each species' common English name, as well as the scientific, Japanese and Hawaiian name. More than 100 stunning photographs feature Hawaii's most spectacular and most commonly observed marine life in their natural environments. Also noted are the species that only occurs in Hawaii and venomous marinelife.

Professional snorkel instructions, illustrations and many helpful tips will prove invaluable for novice snorkelers as well as seasoned professionals looking for a teaching tool.

Reef Watchers Hawaii is available through Blue Kirio Publishing (800) 863-2524, fax (808) 322-4021, e-mail casey m@interpac.net. The Web site is at <http://www.anaserve.com/~bluekirio>. Best Publishing also carries the book, contact this company at (800) 468-1055, fax (520) 526-0370. The book costs \$9.95 plus shipping and handling.

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Okeanos Aggressor

Visiting the Big Boys of Coco Island in Style

BY STAN WATERMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WAYNE HASSON



Huge schools of Scalloped Hammerheads are a Coco Island featured attraction and Okeanos Aggressor specialty.

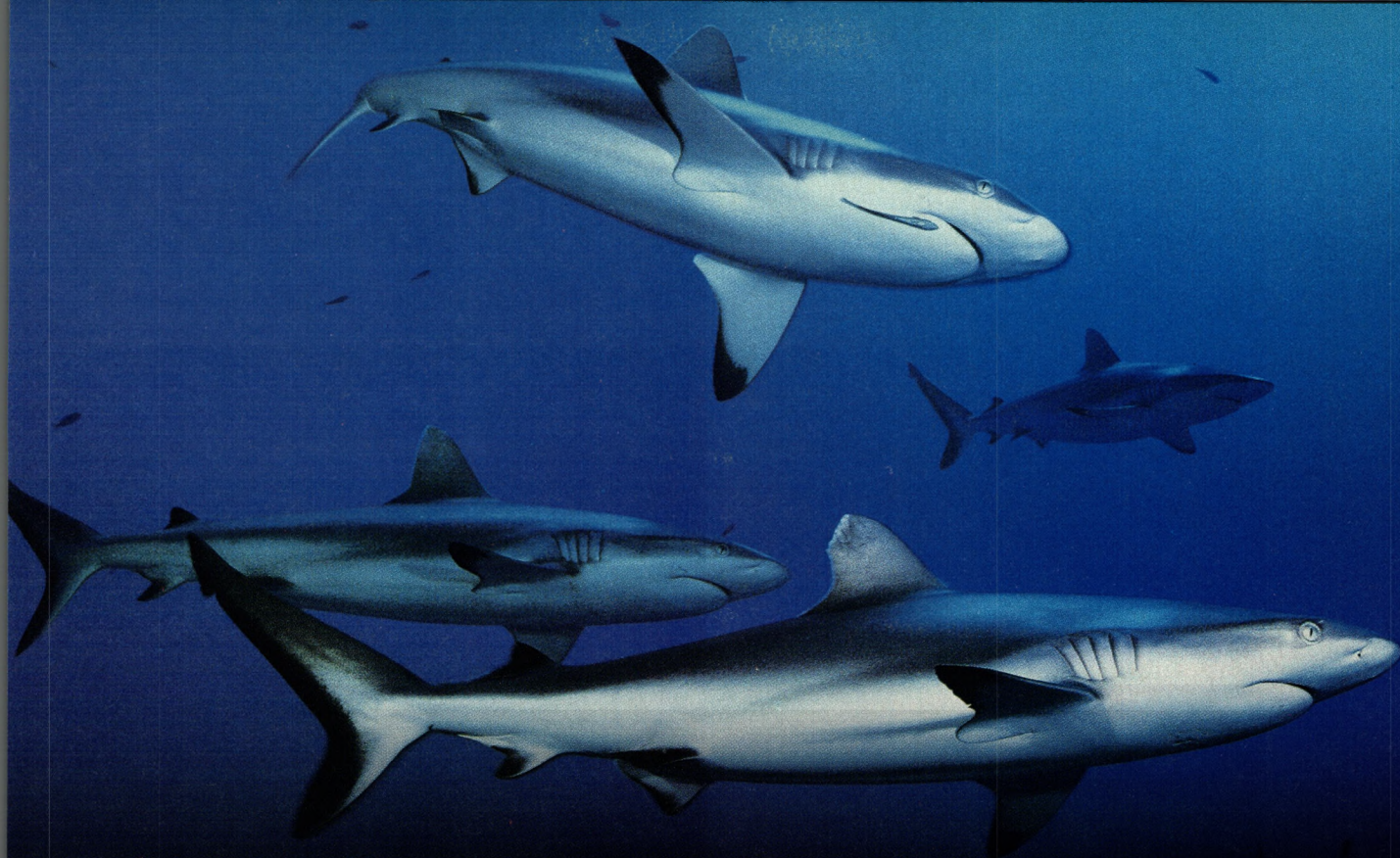
Why do I keep returning to Coco Island year after year? Because it always delivers the goods. Mind you, I can spend an entire week focusing on macro and be a happy diver. But a little excitement from encounters with the "big boys" is hard to turn down. The promise of a lot of excitement pulled me back to Costa Rica, onto the dependable *Okeanos Aggressor*, where I met with long-time friends and crew members before the journey to Shark Central—Coco Island.

Sharks, of course, are a powerful magnet for today's divers. Sharks were the "bad chaps" in the ocean when I started diving. Now they're a must for divers on any trip. Coco Island has a resident school of Scalloped Hammerheads; handsome, robust, six foot animals. Coco dive live-aboards know how to place their guests unobtrusively and quietly, so the Hammerheads will not be spooked and will cruise by just a few feet away for splendid photo ops. Now, with the availability of Dräger Atlantis I rebreather units (which emit far fewer bubbles to scare off the sharks) on the *Okeanos Aggressor*, you may enjoy the big boys, eyeball to eyeball.

Whitetip Reef Sharks are so ubiquitous the Coco diver soon becomes blasé about them. However, I lost my cool on the last trip, during a dusk dive. I found myself in the middle of a stampede of thousands of Whitetips, cruising over the shallow reef in a dense mass.

Add to these encounters big Marble Rays galore, Manta Rays and Whale Sharks with encouraging frequency, and you have a rather compelling dive experience ahead of you. Be forewarned: It might be too exciting for you!





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I have always enjoyed getting to Costa Rica. Direct flights from Houston and Miami take you to the capital city of San Jose. This rich, green country is a happy land, sometimes called the Switzerland of Central America. It is visitor-friendly and so respected by its neighbors that it needs no standing army. It is economically sound and has an interior of mountains, rain forests, rivers for rafting, volcanoes and well run national parks worth visiting after your dive tour.

After an overnight in one of San Jose's excellent hotels, Aggressor

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Belize Aggressor III Belize	110'	18	7 days	\$1,595
Cayman Aggressor III Cayman Islands	110'	18	7 days	\$1,495
Fiji Aggressor Fiji	106'	16	7 days	\$2,095
Galapagos Aggressors III Ecuador	80'	14	7 days	\$2,345
Kona Aggressor II Hawaii	80'	10	7 days	\$1,795
Okeanos Aggressor Costa Rica	120'	21	10 & 11 days	\$2,495/ \$2,795
Palau Aggressor II Palau	106'	16	7 days	\$2,095
Sere-Ni-Wai Fiji	101'	10	7 days	\$2,095
Truk Aggressor II Truk Lagoon	110'	14	7 days	\$2,095
Turks & Caicos Aggressor Turks & Caicos	100'	16	7 days	\$1,495

*Special cruises, such as those with Jean-Michel Cousteau, Stan Waterman or Jim Church, cost more but there are also cruises offered at discount rates—ask when you book!

guests are picked up and taken by bus two hours south through the mountains to Puntarenas, the country's major port on the Pacific.

There guests board the lovely converted yacht, the *Okeanos Aggressor*, and start the open ocean trip to Coco Island, which takes two nights and one day. Whales and pods of dolphins will be your fellow travelers.

On the morning of the second day, 260 miles from the mainland, you will sight the mountains of Coco. Dolphins regularly

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

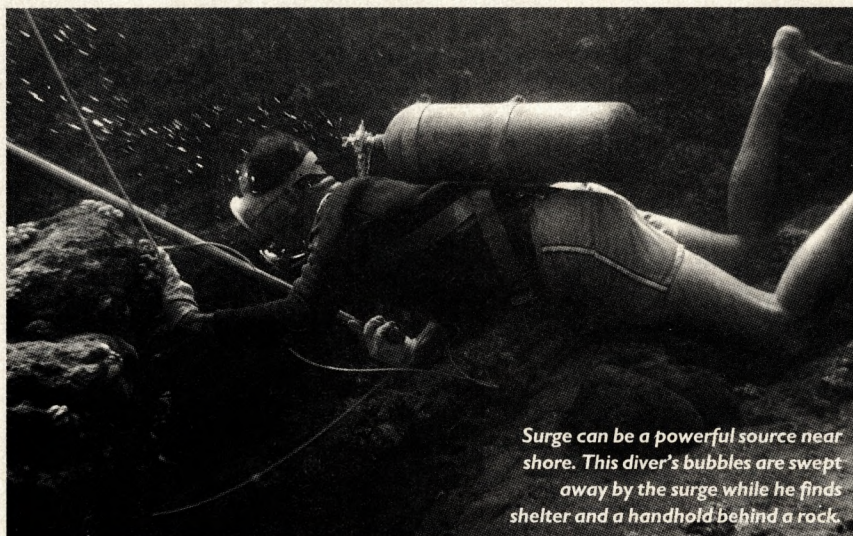
Okeanos Aggressor cruises are best known for:

- Marble and Manta Rays
- Large schools of Scalloped Hammerheads
- Seasonal Whale Sharks
- Whitetip Reef Sharks

(Continued on Page 62)

The Grunge Line

BY E. R. CROSS



Surge can be a powerful source near shore. This diver's bubbles are swept away by the surge while he finds shelter and a handhold behind a rock.

Recreational diving can be almost anything a diver wants it to be. It can range from the undiluted pleasure of breath-hold (free) diving to the hard work (and it is hard work) of mixed gas diving. Regardless of the diving mode a definite pattern should be followed.

For a safe dive certain actions are involved in assembling and donning necessary equipment. Then there is the entry and descent followed by the dive at depth and, finally, a safe ascent to the surface. Regardless of the level of diving experience, the condition of the water—what it is doing and how it may change—should be taken into consideration. This can be determined by reading the water. Simply defined, this means determining the present and future condition and how these will affect dive safety.

READING THE WATER UNDERWATER

It was suggested in previous Technifacts that reading the water should start before the dive. It should be continued during preparation and while underwater. One of the clues to look for, both topside and underwater, is a debris line, called the grunge line by many divers. Topside this will look like a line of discolored foamy water containing floating debris (the grunge); usually material discarded by on-shore humanity. This indicates a definite change in the current at or under the grunge line and may become important to maintaining a safe dive pattern. A drastic change in the water temperature may also occur

with a change in the current. Awareness is the key to successful interpretation of water conditions.

There are several considerations when reading the water during a dive. Any change in the currents could be important to dive safety. Even in tropical, fairly clear water, a change in currents will be evidenced by a change in the water clarity. The grunge line will appear, usually at the limit of visibility, as a mass of discolored water. To determine the approximate direction and rate of flow of the current, hold a handful of sandy-silt a couple of feet off the bottom and allow it to trickle down. If it seems the grunge line is approaching the dive site, it may be wise to plan for a change in the dive profile. Drastic changes in visibility and temperature can sometimes occur with a change of water.

Many other readings can be made during the dive. Be alert for indications of surge caused by ocean swells. Any kelp or other marine growth, as well as free swimming critters, will be washed back and forth with the surge. Also, sand and coral rubble may appear in shallow windrows. These will arrange themselves parallel to the face of the topside swell or underwater surge. As long as the diver can control the dive, surge is not considered hazardous. In fact, surge may be used to accomplish some phases of the dive. Ride in a desired direction then get a hand-hold on the bottom and allow the surge to retreat. Repeat until you've gone

(Continued on Page 91)



The
Portable,
Affordable
Personal
Dive Boat

Quicksilver Inflatables

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

What do the *Moon Dancer*, *Okeanos Aggressor* and *Lammer Law* have in common, other than being high quality live-aboard dive boats? The destinations they serve—the Red Sea, Coco Island and the Galapagos—are worlds apart, yet there is a common denominator. Like dozens of other live-aboards, they deploy their divers from the mother-ship via inflatables.

Granted, they use heavy-duty boats, with up to 75 horsepower out-board motors. They need to carry up to 10 divers in full gear, so their inflatables are beyond the needs of the average consumer. But, the things that make inflatables ideal dive tenders for these live-aboards may motivate you to purchase a scaled down inflatable as your personal dive boat.

STABILITY: A small aluminum or fiberglass V-hull has to be loaded carefully to properly distribute the payload. Too many divers on one side and it could conceivably tip over. An inflatable is far more forgiving because the surface area of the pontoons and the low center of gravity keep it stable in the water.





Top: Snorkelers return to their QS300 after a day of adventure exploring The Bahamas' shallow reefs. **Above:** A leisurely day in the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. This boat, the QS430, can be used for either snorkeling or diving.

EASE OF ENTRY/EXIT: This is where an inflatable truly excels as a dive platform. A simple backward roll off an inflatable is one of the easiest and safest dive entries possible. The freeboard is very low so the chance of a mask or regulator getting caught is minimal. And, in the event of the occasional collision with a body part, a rubber pontoon is far more forgiving than a hard hull.

To enter an inflatable from the water, simply hand the tank and weights to the person on board or, if there is no one to help, attach a hose to the lifelines on the side of the boat and secure your gear there. Then, kick with your fins while you hoist yourself up and onto the pontoon. I find boarding an inflatable much easier than dealing with the small ladders typical of 18 to 20 foot fiberglass boats.

MANEUVERABILITY: An inflatable turns quickly and gets up to cruising speed very efficiently. This is a big help for the

divemaster who has to keep track of divers who may surface far from the boat.

COMFORT: I have spent hours on inflatable boats at the Silver Banks of the Dominican Republic while photographing Humpback Whales. Even for extended excursions from the mothership, the pontoons were comfortable and, when a whale appeared, it was easy to enter the water quietly and efficiently.

One of the most amazing things I experienced while using inflatables for the Silver Banks adventure was hearing the Humpback's song resonating through the pontoons and flooring. We were using a Quicksilver inflatable that day, the same boat I use back home, and it was then I learned to appreciate its cool silver tubes. Spending the entire day in the hot tropical sun, I found the light colored pontoons reflected the heat and were much more comfortable than the black ones that absorb the heat.

EASE OF ASSEMBLY/DISASSEMBLY: Another significant advantage of an inflatable is it can be easily disassembled for storage. Just open the valves, take out the floorboards and roll her up. For extended ocean crossings it is far easier to stow an inflatable than tow a fiberglass dive tender.

A Quicksilver dealer can offer insight into the differences between the various mod-

els, especially regarding the Sport, Airdeck, RhinoRib and RIB models. Each has a tough skin made of a tight weave, non-stretch Duratex 1000 denier polyester that resists cuts and abrasions, as well as damage from prolonged sun exposure. The seams are reinforced inside and out for greater strength. The Sport has an inflatable keel, which provides both top performance and ease of storage. The Airdeck eliminates the rigid floorboards for a 30 percent reduction in weight and probably a 300 percent reduction in assembly time.

The RhinoRib and the QS360 RIB are rigid V-hulled inflatables, which significantly improve performance, particularly in choppy seas. The RhinoRib hull is rotationally molded polyethylene, similar to the best of the whitewater kayaks. The other three rigid hulled models (QS360, QS300 and QS270) have double reinforced fiberglass hulls with anti-skid decks and self-bailing scupper wells.

I prefer the ride of a rigid hulled inflatable but the sport version is easier for storage. Ultimately, it is a choice based on which model best suits your needs. How far offshore will you go? Where will you store the boat? How much money do you want to spend? How many divers will be joining you? Fortunately, with Quicksilver there are plenty of options.

I bought my first Quicksilver inflatable, the 12 foot, 6 inch sport model QS380, eight years ago and equipped it with a 25 horsepower Mercury outboard. Just recently, I traded it



Above: Yacht owners board their very portable QS270 for an outing to a special secret spot. **Left:** Campers enjoying the serenity of an evening on the shores of Lake Mead have a QS300 at their disposal.



A Personal Impression of the Quicksilver Inflatable



The smaller boats (7 feet, 6 inches to 8 feet, 9 inches) make wonderful dinghies for power or sail yachts and can be easily packed up and used for recreation during motor home vacations. These take up so little space a friend of mine uses a roll up dinghy for motoring to shore from his seaplane.

The medium sized boats, around 10 feet, are perfect for general watersport recreation. They are small enough to use as dinghies but large enough to serve more diverse boating needs. They can haul four people or a lot of gear and, with the addition of a 15 horsepower motor, become zippy water toys, perfect for kneeboarding and tubing. But, for scuba diving, one of the larger Quicksilver inflatables is surely the best bet.

A few years ago I decided it was time to invest in a personal dive boat. I live in the Florida Keys and, although the professional dive operations are the best anywhere, I often wished I could go out on my own and dive at my own pace. I wanted to follow my schedule; leaving the dock when I wanted and staying at a good dive site for more than the hour that is common with charter boats. Sometimes I longed to be away from other divers and a private boat seemed the answer. But, I didn't want to spend a lot of money on something I would use only occasionally. An inflatable boat is the answer for the live-aboards, so I figured it was the answer to my personal dive boat needs. After considerable comparison shopping, I decided the best deal by far was the Quicksilver inflatable boat made by Mercury Marine.

A quick look at the Quicksilver catalog revealed plenty of options for a variety of boating objectives. As it says in the catalog, "a two week expedition up a remote river requires more boat than an occasional spin around the lake." As a result, Mercury Marine offers 18 different models, from the 230 RU (roll-up) dinghy to the tough 360 RIB (rigid hull inflatable boat).

Model	Size	Load Capacity	Suggested Outboard
QS330	10'9"	1,205 lbs./4 passengers	15 hp
QS380	12'6"	1,700 lbs./6 passengers	25 hp
QS430	14'1"	2,000 lbs./8 passengers	40 hp
QS330 (Airdeck)	10'9"	1,205 lbs./4 passengers	15 hp
RhinoRib	10'0"	1,075 lbs./4 passengers	15 hp
QS360 (RIB)	11'10"	1,450 lbs./5 passengers	25 hp




Top: The ease of use, transportability and safety of Quicksilver inflatables make them ideal for a day of diving.

For scuba diving, one of Quicksilver's larger boats, from 10 to 12 plus feet, is ideal. Above: A pair of QS430 inflatables speeds to a dive site off Key Largo, Florida.

played on the hull. Safety vests are required for all passengers, one "type four" device (a throwable cushion for flotation), a sound producing device such as an airhorn or whistle and, of course, accessories such as dock line, anchor and dive flag should be carried. I always feel a little safer with my cell phone in a dry box, for those "just in case" situations.

Quicksilver is the name Mercury Marine uses for its line of inflatable boats and a huge collection of marine accessories available through Mercury's dealer network. As you might expect, Quicksilver marine accessories are especially well suited to inflatable boat applications. The paint used for the numbers is formulated to adhere to the Duratex pontoons, the anchors are small and efficient and the dive flags have a suction cup that quickly sticks to the side of the outboard cowl. Just about anything you might imagine to customize your inflatable is available through a Quicksilver dealer.

For portable, affordable dive fun, check out the Quicksilver line of inflatable boats at your local Mercury, Mariner, Force or Mercruiser dealer, as well as select dive shops. For more information or a catalog, phone (800) 552-3882. 

for the 12 foot rigid hulled QS360 RIB. I keep my inflatables on a trailer and, because they weigh so little, the boats are a breeze to launch. I have used my Quicksilvers for many family adventures, including excursions into Florida Bay to photograph birds, skiing and wakeboarding and towing my daughter in the tube.

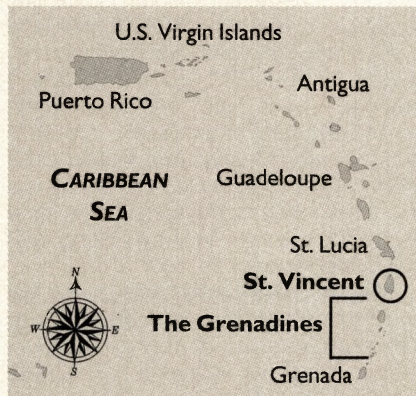
Of course, we also use this boat for scuba diving. In the Keys the coral reef is four to six miles offshore. I don't take the inflatable out on rough days but in calm conditions I have spent many wonderful days photographing the reef dwellers of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary from my Quicksilver inflatable.

Diving from an inflatable is much like diving from any other boat in terms of the legalities. It has to be registered and the appropriate numbers have to be displayed

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

(Continued from Page 13)

British Colony of the Windward Islands in 1871 and a fully independent state of the British Commonwealth in 1979. This island nation is toward the southern end of the Windward Islands, between St. Lucia and Grenada. St. Vincent is the largest island, with the largest population, largest



town and the only international airport. The northern end of the island is dominated by the 4,000 foot peak of La Soufriere volcano. Much of St. Vincent is agricultural, supplying the rest of the is-

lands with a dazzling array of fresh fruit and vegetables.

The Grenadines are reached by ferry, inter-island airlines or private boat. Young Island is only a few hundred yards from St. Vincent; the next major island is Bequia. Pronounced "beck-way," this lovely island is the site of Admiralty Bay, one of the most picturesque harbors in the Caribbean. Next is Mustique (mus-teek), then Canouan (can-o-wan), Mayreau (my-row), the Tobago Cays, Union Island, Palm Island and Petit St. Vincent.

The clear water and sheltered bays of St. Vincent and the Grenadines make them a favorite for sailors; one of the largest charter fleets in the world is located here. Divers aboard one of the yachts can make arrangements for rendezvous dives with local dive operators. Colorful water taxis with names such as *Courage* and *Anticipation* provide transportation around the harbors.

DIVING ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent and the Grenadines are a smorgasbord of diving adventure. Each island and each dive operation has something different to offer. There are a few common denominators, though. The

shops are small but the dive staffs are well qualified. Like Glenroy Adams of Grenadines Dive on Union Island, all of the dive operators have been in business for many years and place a premium on service. Dive instruction from resort to divemaster is available on Union Island, Mustique, Bequia and St. Vincent. A fairly extensive inventory of rental equipment is generally available. None of the operations is so large it can carry enough divers to be considered a crowd.

Most of the year the water temperature is above 80°F, with a high of around 84 and a low of 75. For many divers shorties are adequate anytime but thermally sensitive divers will be more comfortable in a wetsuit in the winter. Visibility normally ranges between 60 and 120 feet, depending on the weather conditions. Currents can vary but, when they are present, the dives are usually conducted as drift dives.

The dive shops in St. Vincent and the Grenadines reflect the different personalities of their owners and staff. As you travel from island to island, you not only see new sights underwater, you get a fresh perspective. Three shops on three different islands offer a unique ten dive split package, which helps you see a bit of everything. Buy the package from Gren-



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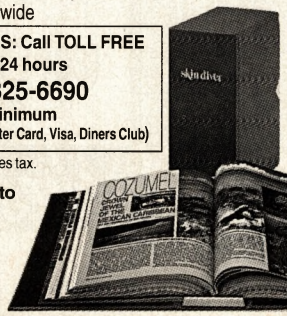
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ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

adines Dive (Union Island), Dive Bequia or Dive St. Vincent and split the dives up among the shops any way you'd like.

UNION, PALM AND MAYREAU ISLANDS

The *Puruni* is a 140 foot long English gunship that ran aground off Saline Bay on Mayreau Island in 1918. The hull now rests on the sand in 40 feet of water, covered with nearly 80 years of coral and sponge growth. Reef sharks cruise the wreck regularly and thousands of fish, from Spotted Morays to Stonefish, call it home. The *Puruni* is also an exceptional night dive. At dusk the surrounding sand is packed with Southern Stingrays searching for prey.

Mayreau Gardens is a long, lush reef with excellent diving on either side. Generally referred to as Mayreau Gardens Deep or Mayreau Gardens Shallow, the dives have a maximum depth of 85 and 60 feet, respectively. Since the reef is in the open sea between islands, there is often a current running along its spine, so both sides are usually done as drift dives. Deep or shallow, it is a fascinating trip filled with clouds of Gray Chromis, sleek Boga and purple Creole Wrasse. There are many of the most colorful reef fish such as Rock Beauties, Queen Triggerfish and Queen Angelfish here, as well as colorful Azure Vase and Orange Elephant Ear Sponges.

Mopian Reef is a vast undulating plain of delicate Finger Corals interspersed with boulders of Star Coral and huge globes of Smooth Brain Coral. Seafans and Sea Plumes grow everywhere they can establish a hold and the reef is thick with damselfish and wrasse.

TOBAGO CAYS

The Tobago Cays are a cluster of small, undeveloped islands guarded by an extensive shallow reef called **Horseshoe Reef**. With a white sand bottom at six feet and coral heads rising almost to the surface, Horseshoe Reef is perfect for snorkeling. Because the water is so shallow, the colors of the coral are not muted by selective light absorption. The seafans are more stridently purple, brain corals are greener and the reef fish are brighter.

Sail Rock can only be dived when the trade winds let up but if the weather cooperates it shouldn't be missed. A few miles northeast of the Tobago Cays, this small rock is the tip of an underwater mountain, with vertical walls, caverns and ledges all thickly covered with coral. Sleeping Blacktip Sharks, Spotted Eagle Rays and large Barracuda are usually seen at Sail Rock. Although there is good

diving down to 80 or 90 feet, the shallow areas with large branches of Elkhorn and Antler Coral are also superb.

Like many places in the world, St. Vincent and the Grenadines are struggling with the problem of overfishing. One of the ways they are attempting to control its impact is through the establishment of the Tobago Cays Marine Park. Officially designated but still in the implementation phase, this protected area includes all of the Tobago Cays, much of the surrounding reef area and the wreck of the *Puruni*.

BEQUIA

The west coast of Bequia has superb diving at many sites, with a variety of underwater topography. Near Middle and West Cays off the south coast of Bequia, **The Wall** features an arch frequented by Blacktip Sharks and a long stretch of vertical rock face encrusted with corals and sponges. Depth ranges between 30 and 110 feet, with prolific marine life throughout. Schools of Atlantic Spadefish and flocks of Midnight Parrotfish are nearly always swimming near the wall. Boulders piled at the bottom of the wall are covered with colonies of Black Coral. If the current is not running, the dive can continue around the wall to the shallow side of the cays.

There are four excellent dive sites around **Pigeon Island**, near Petit Nevis, where the remains of an old whaling station can be seen. **The Pools** are protected bowls within the reef next to a vertical drop-off covered with gorgonians and boulder corals. Good scenery starts almost at the surface and continues down to about 60 feet. The **South Side of Pigeon** features a dense reef that slopes fairly steeply to about 90 feet. The water above the reef is packed with schools of Creoles and Chromis and Nurse Sharks are frequently seen in the sandy patches among the corals. The **North Side of Pigeon** is a sheer wall, dropping from the surface to 70 feet, then sloping more moderately to about 100 feet. More Nurse Sharks are often resting under the boulders at the bottom of the slope. A crevice in the wall at about 50 feet is worth checking out, since it attracts a lot of life.

Devil's Table is at the mouth of Admiralty Bay, where the regular exchange of water in and out of the bay has created a richly abundant habitat. Maximum depth is about 60 feet but Devil's Table is also shallow enough to be an excellent snorkel site. Seahorses, Frogfish and Spotted Morays are among the regulars here. **Moon Hole** is another site for both divers and snorkelers, with depths from 5 to 45 feet. Just around the point from Moon Hole, the bottom continues down to about 90 feet, liberally covered with a mix of hard and soft corals.

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Nearby is the wreck of a 100 foot island freighter, sunk several years ago in about 70 feet of water.

ST. VINCENT

There are about 30 named sites along the coast of St. Vincent but you could jump in the water off any point of land and have a great dive. **New Guinea Reef**, literally within the shadow of a tall cliff on the

southwest coast, is an excellent example. The dive begins with a ledge along a sheer wall, dropping deeper in stages as it wraps around the point. Black Corals start at 60 feet, becoming thicker and more numerous as the tiers of ledges reach 120 feet. The reef is a profusion of deepwater seafans, Brain and Star Corals, Green Tube and Barrel Sponges. Visibility can be spectacular and is normally in the 70 to 120 foot range.

The action at **Anchor Reef** starts around 45 feet, where the wall drops past 100 feet. Morays, lobster and scorpionfish

can be found in an eerie cavern along the wall. Barracuda, jacks and angelfish are always present and the corals are in pristine condition. Snorkeling through **Bat Cave** is a thrilling experience. You swim in a large entrance arch in bright sunlight, then turn and make your way through a narrow channel, where it gets darker and darker. You're in a narrow cut not much more than shoulder wide that cuts through a point of land. Look up as your vision adapts and you can see the bats hanging overhead. Slightly farther, the ocean appears as a deep shaft of blue as you exit the other side.

The currents can be tricky at **Pinnacle Rock** but, when the conditions are right, this is a great dive. A cone of rock rises to within 12 feet of the surface here, attracting hundreds of fish. **Turtle Bay** is known

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TRAVEL INFORMATION

American Airlines operates daily flights to St. Vincent from its hub in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Connections are also available from Barbados, Martinique, Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad. U.S., Canadian and British citizens can travel to St. Vincent and the Grenadines with either a passport or a certified birth certificate and photo ID. The official currency is the Eastern Caribbean (EC) dollar, which is exchanged at about \$2.70 EC to \$1 U.S. dollars, traveler's checks and major credit cards are accepted at most hotels. Electrical current is 220 volts/50 cycles, except on Petit St. Vincent, which uses 110 volts/60 cycles. Some adapters and transformers are available at hotels but, if you need them for battery chargers or other essentials, it's best to bring your own.

November to February is the coolest period, with low temperatures around 65°F. During the remainder of the year, high temperatures are about 90°F. Rain is rare from December to June but brief afternoon showers are likely from July to November. The dress standard is island casual and a light jacket or sweater might be needed on winter evenings. To avoid offending your hosts, swimwear should not be worn in the shops or restaurants.

for its unusual sealife, including Frogfish, Flying Gurnards and Seahorses. Dive depths are usually around 60 feet maximum but diving is also good among the Finger and Elkhorn Corals in the shallower areas. Blacktip Sharks can often be seen resting under the ledges at **All Awash Island**. Big animals are frequently encountered here, including Amberjacks, Hawksbill Turtles and Nurse Sharks.

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CONCLUSION

St. Vincent and the Grenadines are as interesting topside as underwater. On every island there are inspiring ocean

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views and tranquil beaches. The Falls of Baleine on St. Vincent cascade over a 60 foot drop into a freshwater pool. The northern end of the island is so inaccessible the falls can only be reached by boat. Serious hikers can test their mettle on the trails of La Soufriere but there are also gentle scenic hikes on this volcano. Constructed by the British about 1815, the 300 foot Black Point Tunnel was used to transport sugar. The tunnel was constructed by slave labor and is still considered a remarkable engineering feat. The St. Vincent Botanical Gardens was founded in 1765 and is the oldest in

the Western Hemisphere. A breadfruit tree taken from a shoot of one of the original plants brought to the island by Captain Bligh still grows here.

For more information, contact the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Tourist Office toll free in New York at (800) 729-1726 or in Dallas at (800) 235-3029. From outside the U.S. call New York at (212) 687-4981 or Dallas at (972) 239-6451. 🐟

Dive Notes

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Twenty years ago, Doubilet and

Professor Gerard Wellington, marine biologist, University of Houston, studied the magnificent undersea world Charles Darwin never saw. They were astonished at the beauty and diversity of the islands' marine life. Their findings were featured in a 1977 National Geographic story. The world-renowned magazine has asked them to return with Peter Benchley and report the effects nature and mankind have had on the area over the 20 year period. Guests will learn about the environmental changes through casual discussions and slide shows.

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Peter Hughes Diving

OKEANOS AGGRESSOR

(Continued from Page 52)

take position on the bow and joyously ride its wake, escorting you to the island. Most likely the mountains will be cloud capped. Coco has an annual rainfall of 27 feet. There are about 200 waterfalls, most cascading down the sheer rock faces and escarpments that ring the island. Two can be found by following their stream beds to deep, clear freshwater pools; providing delightful shore excursions.

The only population on Coco, other than feral pigs and goats, is found at the warden station. Equipped with a fast skiff and modest fire power, the wardens patrol the territorial waters to prevent commercial fishermen from encroachment. With the Costa Rican government behind them, they have successfully policed the island perimeter out to several miles. The result: The schools of Hammerhead Sharks, tuna and jacks have prospered and increased. Coco Island is a diver-friendly environment.

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AGGRESSOR CRUISES

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Sail with Jean-Michel Cousteau

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<i>Fiji Aggressor</i>	August 9 to 16
<i>Okeanos Aggressor</i>	October 18 to 27

Jean-Michel Cousteau/Team Nikonos	
<i>Cayman Aggressor III</i>	August 23 to 30

JIM CHURCH/STAN WATERMAN 1997 PHOTO COURSES

Palau Aggressor II

October 5 to 12

Truk Aggressor II

October 12 to 19

1997 JIM CHURCH PHOTO COURSES

Cayman Aggressor III

August 9 to 16

Fiji Aggressor

October 25 to November 1

1997 CLAY WISEMAN PHOTO COURSES

Belize Aggressor III

August 23 to 30

Turks & Caicos Aggressor

November 1 to 8

1997 STAN WATERMAN PHOTO COURSES

Fiji Aggressor

September 6 to 13

Belize Aggressor III

December 6 to 13

with the crew on special occasions.

Prime dive sites are all around the big island. Thus, the mother ship can always be anchored in a lee and place the divers on the locations that are out of the wind. On the west and north sides, **Manuelita Island** (where I encountered the massed Whitetips) and **Dirty Rock**, you regularly encounter Hammerheads. If the wind and seas are rough in that sector, **Manta Corner** and **Submerged Rock** provide ample excitement on the southeast shore.

The inflatables are always loaded in calm water and expertly handled by a wise, veteran boat crew and accompanied by dive guides who have been with the ship for many years.

There are strong currents and upwellings of cold water along the rocks and small islands that border the main island. The operators of the skiffs and inflatables that launch the divers know exactly how the currents will affect the course of the dive. They are always there when you come up.

I would suggest that Coco Island diving is for seasoned divers, not beginners. And, if you dread encountering sharks, Bonaire or Grand Cayman would be a wiser choice. I will return to Coco for the seventh time this year. The Discovery Channel called me "The Man Who Loves Sharks." Obviously, I still have a love affair with Coco Island.

For more information, contact the Aggressor Fleet at (800) 348-2628, (504) 385-2628 or fax (504) 384-0817. You can write to P.O. Drawer K, Morgan City, LA 70381; send e-mail to divboat@compuserve.com or visit the Web site at <http://www.aggressor.com>.

Dive Notes

CURACAO TO HOST NIKONOS SHOOTOUT IN SEPTEMBER: A 1997 Nikonos Shootout will be held for the first time on Curacao, September 13 to 20, 1997. The week-long Shootout provides hands-on instruction by professional underwater photographers, marine biology seminars, buoyancy control workshops and the chance for registrants to compete in five photo contests. All amateur underwater photographers shooting with Nikonos cameras can compete, with special provisions for SLR cameras.

Participation in the Nikonos Shootout is free for visitors to Curacao and includes workshops, seminars, instruction, four rolls of film donated by Eastman Kodak and entry in the photo contests.

Prizes include U/W photo gear from Nikon, dive equipment, dive apparel and dive travel. The grand prize includes Nikonos photo equipment and a week aboard the luxury live-aboard dive boat, Peter Hughes' *Star Dancer*, in Papua New Guinea.

Hotel sponsors on Curacao are Habitat Curacao, the Lions Dive Resort and the Crowne Plaza Princess Beach Resort and Casino. Other sponsors are SKIN DIVER Magazine, Henderson Aquatics, Sea Quest, Kodak, Mercury Marine and Quicksilver Inflatables.

To register in advance or for travel information, contact WaterHouse Photo Tours, P.O. Box 2487, Key Largo, FL 33037; (800) 272-9122. For more information, call (800) 3CURACAO or contact the Curacao Tourist Board, 475 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016; (212) 683-7660, fax (212) 683-9337.

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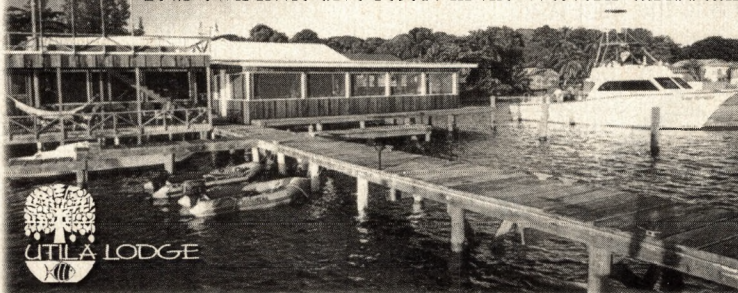
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Dive Notes

SARA SHOEMAKER RECEIVES THE OUR WORLD-UNDERWATER SCHOLARSHIP: As the Our World-Underwater Scholarship winner for 1997-1998, many exciting educational adventures are about to shape my future. The Our World-Underwater Scholarship, now in its 23rd year, annually sends one young person on a year of study and work experience.

Every year the scholar has a new

itinerary of destinations relating to the underwater world. My first destination is Truk Lagoon, where I will learn how to shoot underwater video and photography with Stan Waterman and Jim Church aboard the *Truk Aggressor II*. This is a fabulous opportunity made possible by the generous sponsorship of the Aggressor Fleet and many others. Dacor has outfitted me with a new set of dive equipment. O'Neill and Henderson have taken care to make sure every inch is covered in the latest exposure protection designs.

Nikon, Helix and Light and Motion

Industries have given photographic equipment for the scholarship year and a host of other important sponsors, including Rolex, Divers Alert Network and Orca Dive Computers, will make this an unforgettable time of exploration.

Once I return from Micronesia my itinerary will include a course at Brooks Institute, along with other activities in Southern California. Time on the *Clavella* with Orcas in the British Columbia will take me to drysuit diving territory. The northeastern region of the USA will be visited in addition to North Carolina, home of DAN. Working my way south, I will learn how to cave dive at Ginnie Springs in Northern Florida. The Florida Keys will be a big part of the itinerary owing to the large amount of diving and related marine education awareness projects in the area. The Cayman Islands are scheduled for late fall and then I will be in Anaheim, California in January for DEMA.

I will keep a journal and document the many experiences on film; the final video

will be presented at the Our World-Underwater Show Film Festival held in April in Chicago. The ultimate goal of career definition through a well-rounded education will help me



Sara Shoemaker

make the best contribution to the underwater world.

For further information on the Scholarship Society please write to Our World-Underwater Scholarship Society, P.O. Box 4428, Chicago, IL 60680; call (312) 666-6525 or fax (312) 666-6846.

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VENEZUELA'S *Los Roques*

CARIBBEAN DIVING'S FINAL FRONTIER

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS



Top: The 85 foot Antares III live-aboard gives divers immediate access to Los Roques' most remote reefs.
Above right: The Batwing Coral Crab (*Carpilius corallinus*) can be found foraging for food on the reef at night.

66 SKIN DIVER AUGUST 1997



La Piedra De La Guasa, also known as the **Pinnacle**, goes from typical Caribbean to the sublime. Straight out from the north face of Gran Roque, the large, wedge shaped rock formation rises from 105 feet to within 26 feet of the surface. While its western sloping side—covered with stubby colonies of Yellow Tube Sponges and long, flowing searods—is not unusual, its more abrupt eastern drop-off is. Plunging vertically some 90 feet, its contours are almost exclusively covered in colonies of yellow, purple, orange and green encrusting sponges, with a plenitude of bright Orange Cup Corals mixed in. And, everywhere I looked were swarms of Bogas, Brown Chromis and Creole Wrasse. There were also large Bermuda Chubs, Horse-eye Jacks and a couple of very large Barracuda near the top. Closer to the rocks, large Gray and medium sized Cubera Snappers and groupers such as Tiger and Yellowfin, including more than a dozen Comb Groupers exhibiting pack behavior near the bottom, were making random attacks on their smaller neighbors. No matter which way I looked, there were lots of fish and a swirl of activity.

Eighty-five miles north of Caracas, Venezuela and roughly 100 miles east of Bonaire is the island cluster of Los Roques. Depending upon the dialect, this means "the rocks" or "lots of rocks," an apt description.

Spanning some 850 square miles, with numerous shallows,

reefs and some 50 low lying, white sandy cays with fringing mangrove forests, Los Roques Archipelago is a bit of a geological Caribbean oddity. By definition, Los Roques is a coral atoll, featuring a large, shallow central lagoon hemmed in by a comprehensive barrier. There are not many of these in this area of the globe. The only visible remnant of Los Roques' once volcanic origin is the towering protrusion of dark gray and rust colored rock in the northwest corner.

In addition to being the only high ground, Gran Roque, or "grand rock," is also home to Los Roques' principal populace. Numbering 500, it is comprised mostly of native fishermen and their families. Since its settlement, Los Roques has been considered a place of bounty for fish and sea turtles.

Recognizing Los Roques as a valuable resource, the Venezuelan government took measures to protect it from the perils of overfishing. The result was the largest national marine park in the Caribbean. Since its establishment in 1972, the park has been divided into several designated fishing and no fishing zones. The two largest off-limits zones to fishing and diving are near the center of the park and the entire barrier reef system lining its eastern edge. This is no loss really, since the eastern edge is almost constantly buffeted by winds from the east/northeast. Besides, the areas offering the greatest opportunity for exploration are between Los Roques' north and south side.

DIVING LOS ROQUES

What gives the south side an air of intrigue are some 18 miles of sharp drop-offs, similar to the fringing reef systems off Aruba and Curacao. Following the length of the south side's two ribbon shaped cays, Cayo Sal and Maceta de Cote, the main body of the outer reef system begins between 25 and 35 feet from the surface, sloping sharply to a flat, sandy plane with scattered coral heads at 120 to 140 feet. Adorning the contours is a forest of giant Slit-Pore and Porous Searods. Mingled with these tall, wavy soft corals are large, scattered heads of Brain and Star Corals with small Orange Elephant Ear Sponges.

Farther west, close to the western tip of Cayo Sal, the drop-offs become almost vertical at 50 to 65 feet. At 70 to 90 feet, the face of the drop-off features seven large, wide mouthed cave entrances 12 to 30 feet deep. During the early and late afternoon hours, the drop-off becomes a magnet for all kinds of life, including Spotted Eagle Rays, some with wingspans of up to five feet; scores of Horse-eye and Bar Jacks; cigar sized Bogas; Creole Wrasse; large Permit; several medium sized Atlantic Dogtooth Snappers; groupers and a 180 pound Jewfish.

Los Roques' north side offers a different diving experience than that of the south. Deep in the base at 30 feet is **The Cave** (*La Buceadora*), a large, underwater cavern-like formation 15 feet wide. Inside, the cave extends almost straight back some 60 feet, ending at a narrow crack filled with small pink and red shrimp, lobsters and Blackbar Soldierfish. Outside the entrance, the rocky contours work particularly well for nighttime macro hunts, with small corals and encrusting sponges over volcanic type rock. On the north side the underwater visibility averages 40 to 60 feet and sometimes the water is several degrees cooler than the reef system along the south side. Even with the locale's proximity to the equator, producing year-round air temperatures in the mid 80s (°F), the water temperature can sometimes fluctuate from the low 80s to the slightly nippy mid 70s. This is caused by thermoclines, which also drop the visibility to less than 40 feet.

Island booking services to Los Roques are provided by the Venezuelan based company LTA (Linea Turistica Aereotuy), which operates a long list of lodges, camps and sailing vessels, an airline service and one live-aboard dive boat. For shore-based stays, guests are lodged in one of several LTA sponsored *posadas* scattered across the central community of Gran Roque. A *posada* is a boarding house facility, with guest bedrooms featuring either a single twin sized bed or two singles per



Top: A bouquet of Orange Cup Corals (*Tubastrea coccinea*) brightens the eastern drop-off of the Pinnacle. **Middle:** The lodgings at Camp Ucaima are nestled into Canaima National Park. **Above:** Comb Groupers hunt for their next meal on the sloping face of the Pinnacle.

room. Several of these establishments also offer various meal programs, from breakfast to home cooked dinners or, in some cases, provided by a restaurant in town. There is no air-conditioning or hot water. Electricity is available from approximately 5:00 pm to 9:00 am.

Diving services are provided by Sesto Continente Dive Operation, a small beachside facility equipped with aluminum 80s, Sea Quest rental equipment (BCs, regulators, masks and fins), a large dive boat and a smaller six passenger boat. Departing at 9:00 am each day, the itineraries include daily excursions to both Los Roques' northern and southern boundaries. Trips to the north side typically return around noon, while jaunts to the southern region along Maceto de Cote and Cayo Sal typically take 50 minutes to an hour each way, returning around 3:00 pm.

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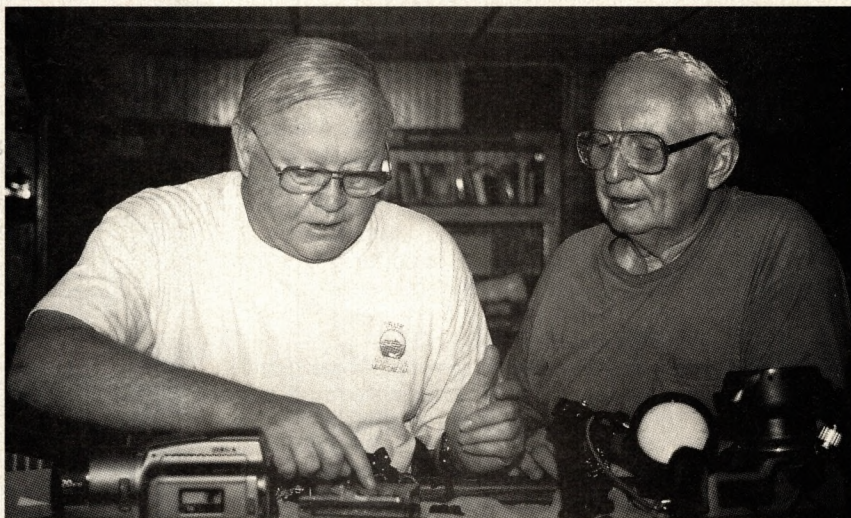
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For serious diving adventures to all open sectors of the Los Roques National Park, LTA's 85 foot dive cruiser, *Antares III*, is the answer. Equipped with two on-board compressors, standard 80 aluminum tanks and a couple 63 cubic foot tanks, the steel hulled trawler can easily accommodate 14 divers. There are two double cabins on the main deck; three more doubles and a quad below. All include private shower and head, amenities usually found only on vessels twice this size. Even the main saloon features an impressive amount of floor space, with hardwood floors, booth-style sofas and dining tables. In addition to a full line of rental equipment—current model Sea Quest regulators, BCs, masks and fins—the *Antares* has a cellular telephone and fax system.

(Continued on Page 130)

Underwater Video for Senior Divers

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM CHURCH



I've seen a trend develop during the past five years: Increasing numbers of senior divers (okay, senior citizens) are shooting underwater video. They enjoy capturing their underwater experiences and sharing these treasured moments with family and friends.

Older divers often want quick and easy results. They don't have the time or patience to master the mysteries of a 35mm still camera. They don't want the hassle of film processing, slide projectors or the time-consuming task of arranging photos in an album. They want images they can see immediately. Thus, underwater video is the obvious answer.

The fear of handling an underwater camera must be conquered before a beginner can enjoy shooting video. To illustrate, allow me to relate a true story: An older couple signed on for one of my photo courses. The husband stated, "My wife has no interest in photography. She'll just follow me around." After watching him shoot Nikonos close-ups for two days, she was obviously bored. Underwater, I had her hold my video housing a couple of times while I helped her husband. Then, without warning, I

placed her hands on the twin handles, pointed to the record button, placed her thumb on it and gave her the "headwaiter's gesture" with a sweep of my hand. Once she realized she had a live camcorder in her hands, she immediately aimed it at her husband, over to a passing angelfish, then back to her husband. When we surfaced, her first words were,

"Can I use it again?" She shot video on every dive for the rest of the course and had a fantastic time. After the course, I received a letter from her husband that said, while he had to purchase a video outfit for her,

it was worth the investment because she now wants to do more diving.

Besides adding a new dimension to diving, shooting underwater video can help you improve your diving skills. Because holding the camera as still as possible produces the best video, you will learn to fine tune your buoyancy and keep your arms and legs still when you don't need them. If you are one of those divers who zips about and tries to see everything, you will have to slow the pace of your dives. You will swim slower, see more and decrease your air consumption.

KEEPING FIT FOR VIDEO

Because diving is a physical activity, start a mild conditioning program several weeks before a diving vacation.

Walking is easy and inexpensive but many of my friends and myself have joined health clubs. I make the morning visit to the health club a social event in addition to exercising. If I do 36 minutes each morning on a stationary bike (as I watch the news on TV), my air consumption on dives falls dramatically.

Bob Soto's Diving

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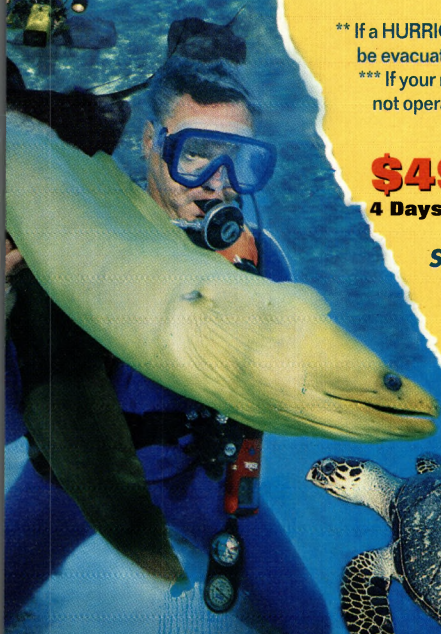
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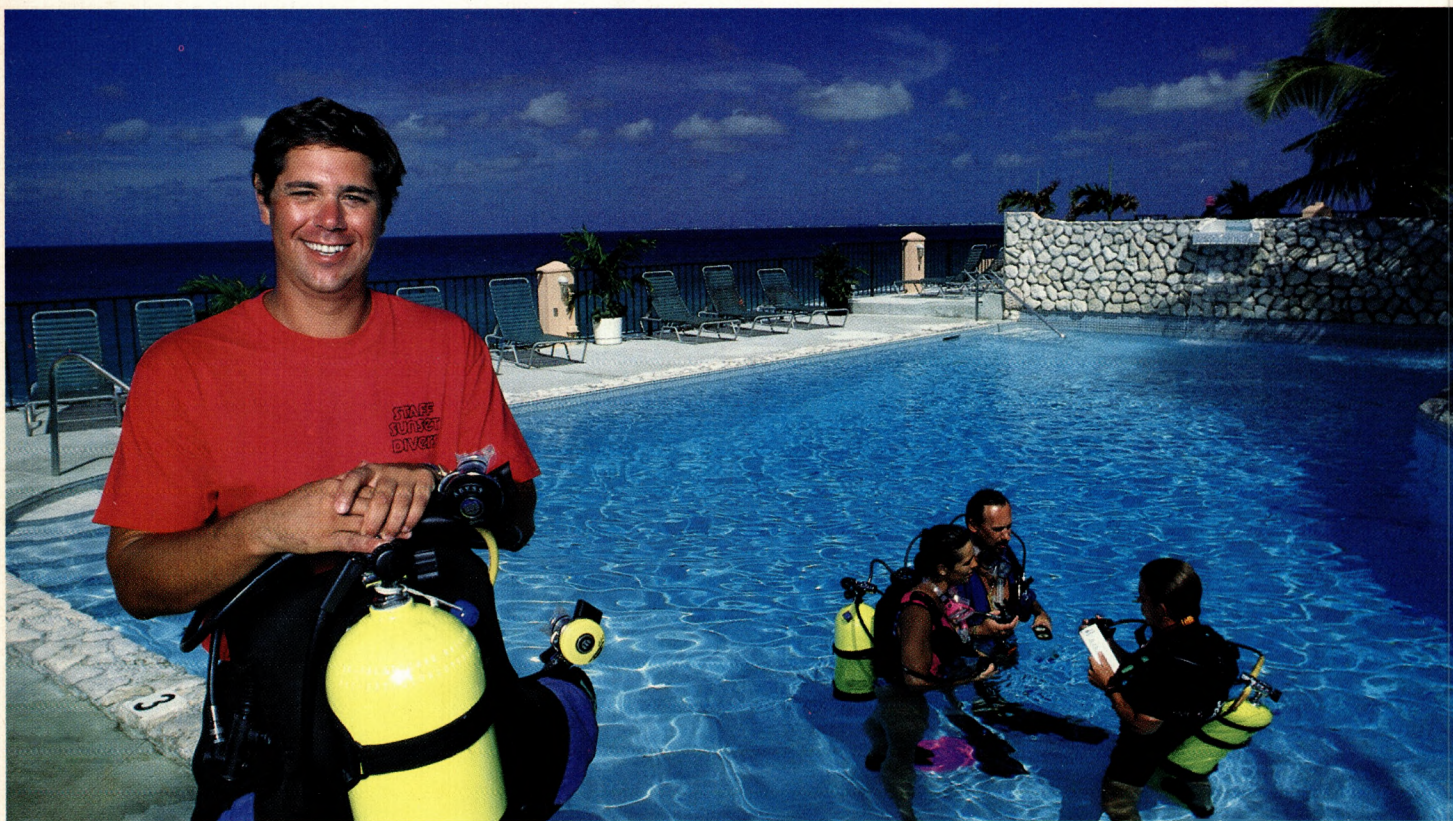
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The Montana

BERMUDA'S CONFEDERATE BLOCKADE RUNNER

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS



The 236 foot *Montana* wrecked off Bermuda in 1863. Her paddlewheel frames (top) make excellent photo subjects now.

Several ships from the American Civil War found the reefs surrounding the tiny island outpost of Bermuda as much a thorn in the side of the Confederacy as the Union Blockade—they were wrecked here. Their numbers include the *Montana*, a 236 foot long, 25 foot beam tramp steamer with a displacement of 750 tons, less cargo. Tramp steamer was a common nickname given vessels of her class owing to the large amount of coal ash that would collect on the sails whenever the furnace was active. The *Montana*'s furnace powered a 260 hp, twin oscillating cylinder steam engine. During her short career as a Confederate blockade runner, the ship's two captains tried to elude Union spies by piloting her under the aliases of *Nola*, *Gloria* and *Paramount*.

Following her departure from the British Isles in December 1863 with a cargo of munitions and medical supplies for the Confederacy in Wilmington, North Carolina, the *Montana* faced a series of circumstances that eventually brought about her demise.

During the first leg of her mission, under the command of Captains Pittman and Rollins, the *Montana* (known at the time as the *Nola*) was hampered by the North Atlantic's brutal winter storms. Arriving off Bermuda's east side under still threatening skies, the captains decided that finding an entrance somewhere on the western side would be their best bet. But, even after circumnavigating most of the island's dangerous north facing reef system, the *Montana* wrecked near the mouth of Western Blue Cut. Shortly after her grounding on December 30, a steam-

boat from St. George's was able to go to her assistance, rescuing not only her crew but most of her cargo. Nothing could be done for the *Montana*, she had a 10 foot long hole in her hull below the waterline.

Today the *Montana*'s scattered remains lie in 30 feet of water in the middle of a large sand valley surrounded by high coral heads, eight miles northwest of the Hamilton dockyard. Her bow is still relatively intact and heavily encrusted with coral. The greatest concentration of wreckage—and the most attractive for photography—lies around her midship region. Here, the *Montana*'s coal burning engine furnace can still be seen standing upright about seven feet below the surface. Behind it are the ship's two large iron paddlewheel frames, which look like small Ferris wheels. Both structures and the bow

BERMUDA DIVE OPERATORS

If you are interested in visiting Bermuda and diving its wrecks, contact any of the dive operators listed below:

Blue Water Divers Co., Ltd.
P.O. Box SN 165
Southampton SN BX, Bermuda
(441) 234-1034; (441) 234-3561 (fax)
E-mail: bwdivers@ibl.bm
www.divebermuda.com

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E-mail: fantasea@ibl.bm
www.Bermuda-Watersports.com/fantasea

Nautilus Diving, Ltd.
P.O. Box HM237
Hamilton HM AX, Bermuda
(441) 238-2332
(441) 295-9485; (441) 234-5180 (fax)

Scuba Look
Grotto Bay Beach Hotel
P.O. Box 658
Warwick WK BX, Bermuda
(441) 293-7319; (441) 295-2421 (fax)
E-mail: scubaluk@ibl.bm
www.diveguideint.com/p0078.htm

South Side Scuba
Sonesta Beach Resort
Southampton, Bermuda
(441) 238-1833; (441) 236-0394 (fax)
E-mail: southsid@ibl.bm
www.Bermuda-Watersports.com

are heavily overgrown with corals.

Slightly separated from the rest of the wreckage, her stern, also heavily overgrown with coral, still features the elliptical framework of the fantail.

The *Montana* sits near the wreck of the **Constellation**, which hit the same section of reef in 1942, approximately 79 years after the *Montana*.

The prime season for diving both wrecks is August through October, when visibility is usually at its best and the water is still in the 78 to 82°F range. 🐟

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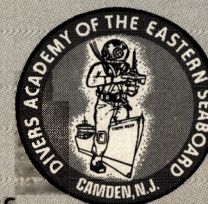
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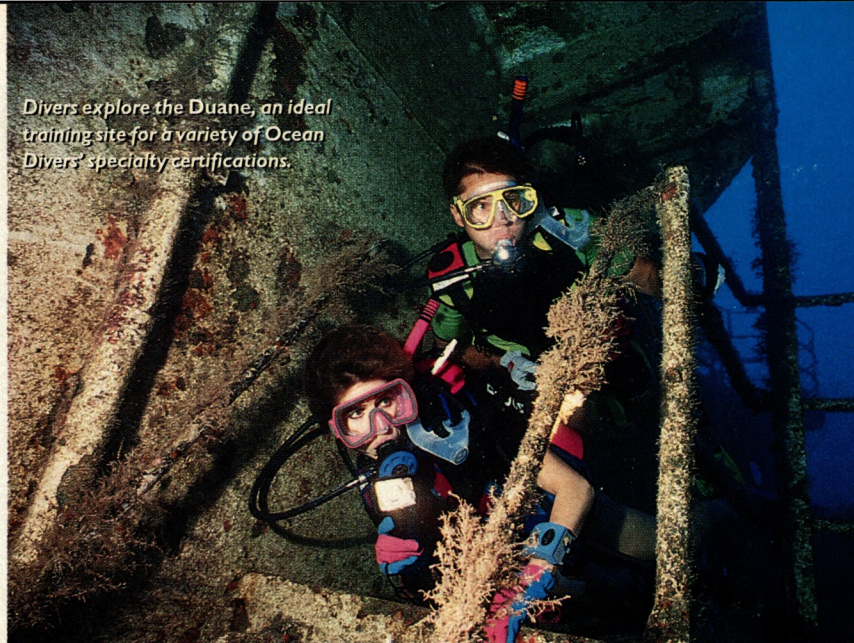
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Gary Howe holds class in Marina Del Mar's pool.



Divers explore the Duane, an ideal training site for a variety of Ocean Divers' specialty certifications.

Continuing Your Dive Education in the Fabulous Florida Keys

Ocean Divers

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

Research recently conducted by the *National Travel Monitor* revealed "vacationers seeking underwater adventure now outnumber those seeking fun on the tennis court, golf course, or ski slope." However, unlike skiing, golf and tennis, scuba diving requires a certain level of education for safety and even more for pure, relaxed enjoyment. Ocean Divers of Key Largo, Florida, has long recognized this need for professional certification and has formulated a program of continuing education tied into the recreational aspects of a Florida Keys dive holiday.

OCEAN DIVERS' RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: Ocean Divers has long maintained that scuba instruction should be fun, so rather than tie students to excessive hours in a classroom, its courses maximize time spent in the ocean. The 7,000 square foot dive complex is on a deepwater canal with quick, easy access to the south end of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary and John Pennnekamp Coral Reef State Park.

The best reefs and wrecks off Key Largo are five to seven miles offshore. Obviously this is not a shore dive destination, so dive boats are a critical component of Ocean Divers' formula for success. The *Ocean Diver* is a 50 foot fiberglass V-hull vessel and the *Big Red* is a 50 foot aluminum catamaran. Both vessels have large twin diesels for speed and reliability and are well equipped with amenities, such as tank racks, camera table, freshwater showers, walk-through transom and an oversized dive platform with dual extended ladders.

The whole dive complex, including a well-stocked retail area, gear rental cage, guest gear storage and classrooms, is at the water's edge. The massive air compressor system with nitrox capability handles tank fills; tanks and weights are available right on the boat. There is a functioning hyperbaric chamber on the premises, although it is for education rather than treatment. Operated by Dick Rutkowski's Hyperbarics International, these programs teach advanced levels of mixed



The Christ of the Abyss statue sits in 25 feet of water at Key Largo Dry Rocks in the marine sanctuary.



Ocean Divers' 50 foot Big Red.

photo/Bill Harrigan

gas technology (especially nitrox) and on-going physician certifications. Just to make things even more convenient, there is a restaurant for breakfast and lunch and Sharky's Beer Company for an after dive cocktail.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS: As would be expected of any quality dive operation, basic open water scuba certifications are easily booked on demand. Full certification courses are offered under the auspices of PADI but referral education (also known as open water completions) can be done under PADI, NAUI or SSI. In fact, these referral programs have become increasingly popular at Ocean Divers. This allows students to work with their dive shop back home for the technical, classroom portions of their scuba certification. Even the pool sessions can be done back home. But, instead of doing the open water dives in a cold, dark quarry or lake, you can finish the course diving the reefs of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary under the supervision of an Ocean Divers' instructor. You learn the same skills but within the environment of a tropical dive holiday.

At the entry level, Ocean Divers introduces the sport of scuba via resort courses. More appropriately known as the Discover Scuba Course, this program allows a non-certified diver to explore the basics of scuba in the classroom, pool and along a shallow coral reef (under the close supervision of an instructor), all in the same day.

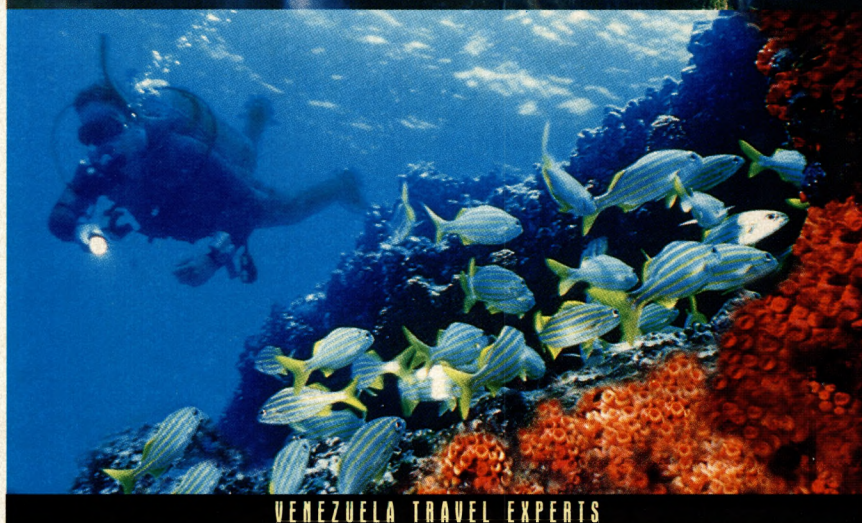
However, Ocean Divers is committed to advanced diver education. It has purchased a number of Scubapro Dive Link underwater communication devices, which allow the instructor to speak to the student underwater rather than rely on hand signals. Imagine the convenience, safety and enhanced educational possibilities these devices can provide!

Specialty certifications are constantly in demand at Ocean Divers. These expand on the specifics of a particular underwater activity and, given the diversity of its underwater resources, Key Largo is a perfect place to expand skills. For example, the Wreck Dive specialty gives students the opportunity to dive the remains of the **Benwood**, a World War II era freighter, or the **Bibb** and **Duane**, a pair of 327 foot Coast Guard cutters intentionally sunk as dive attractions in 1987. The **Duane** settled upright in 120 feet of water, while her sister ship now rests on her starboard side at 130 feet. Both have attracted abundant marine life, including a colorful encrustation of sponges, hydroids and hard corals. While they are obvious destinations for Wreck Dive specialty certifications, they are also popular underwater classrooms for Deep Dive and Nitrox specialties.

(Continued on Page 109)

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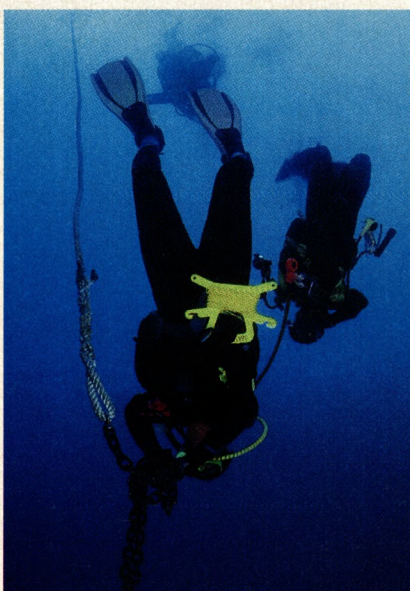
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Divers Unlimited Gold Program

TRAINING INSTRUCTORS "A CUT ABOVE THE REST"

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
WALT STEARNS

With each passing year, more and more dive resorts and stores around the globe will open their doors for the first time. At the same time, existing operations will continue to seek key personnel to fulfill the growing demands of specialized diving practices. For example, several respected resorts and live-aboards now offer nitrox and, with the popular specialties of underwater photography, wreck diving, underwater naturalist and deep diving, the industry is more complex than ever. Many scuba instructors seeking a role in this exciting and challenging industry quickly discover that offering entry level training is simply not enough.



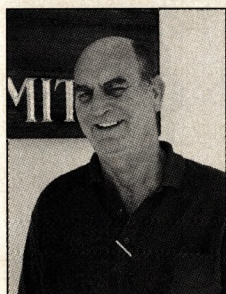
Top: Divemaster Jose Bertrand conducts anchorline tie-off drills. **Above left:** Course director Raul Loredo and students descend to the Mercedes with the second mooring down-line. **Above right:** Students practice penetration dives on the Mercedes. **Left:** ROS students check their nitrox tables.

For an instructor holding an ROS (Resort Operations Specialist) Gold Card "membership has its privileges." This is especially apparent when you look at their typical starting salary, which is \$3,000 to \$5,000 more than their counterparts holding basic open water instructor ratings.

The rationale is simple. An ROS instructor is certified in at least one-half dozen specialty courses, including Medic First Aid and Nitrox. This instructor is also trained in both dive boat and compressor operations.

Providing this type of upper level training is 26 year old Divers Unlimited, a PADI Career Development Center. The success of this Hollywood, Florida, facility has come through the leadership of owner Dave Inman.

Divers Unlimited is not an "instructor factory" interested only in certifying students and swiftly kicking them out the door. This PADI Five Star Instructor Training facility is interested in what it can



Dave Inman

do for the instructor candidates seeking to make a career in this dynamic field; an attitude that has earned DU a list of prestigious titles and awards for excellence. DU's focus isn't on the number of

graduates but what these individuals will accomplish with the knowledge and training they have gained.

THE GOLD PROGRAM

To keep in step with the ever changing aspects of the industry, the Divers Unlimited Gold Program is constantly evolving, developing programs from which instructors, new and old, can benefit.

At present, DU offers 13 specialties at the instructor level that can be custom designed to work best with an instructor's career goals and desired work environment. In particular is its MSDT (Master Scuba Diver Trainer) Program, designed for those planning to stay in the U.S. market. The MSDT includes the big five specialties (based on the demand/interest of most shop clientele), Wreck, Deep, Night, Naturalist and Navigator. Divers Unlimited's unique access to a large variety of wreck sites (ranging in depth from 60 to 110 feet) gives MSDT students the opportunity to practice everything from simple wreck dives to more complex penetrations.

With the Underwater Naturalist specialty, students construct their own reef

(Continued on Page 123)

GUANAJA, BAY ISLANDS

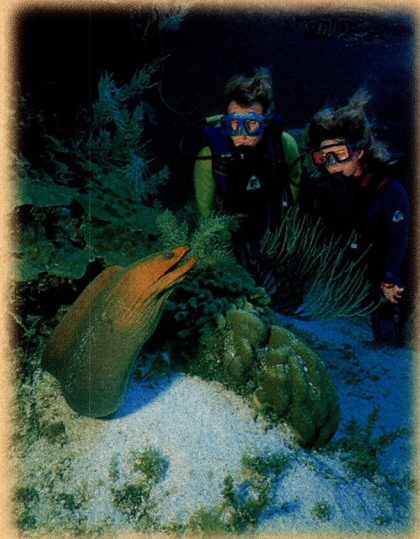
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Top: This anemonefish photo was easy to get using Sea & Sea's MX-10 camera with Close-up Lens and YS-40A strobe. Appropriate subjects for this system include corals, sponges, turtles and other medium-sized marine life.

Sea & Sea's MX-10 with Close-Up Lens

U/W PHOTOGRAPHY MADE EASY

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Everyone wants to take fish pictures. In the past this took lots of equipment, skill and patience. Sea & Sea Underwater Photography USA has a better way. Its MX-10 is an entry level camera that allows you to change lenses underwater. The Close-up Lens, for instance, attaches to the built-in camera lens and expands your picture taking potential. It allows you to photograph subjects as close as 1.6 feet. This makes taking pictures of fish, coral, sponges, turtles and other medium-sized under-sea animals easy.

The MX-10 Close-up Lens has a single element mounted in heavy duty ABS resin. A special bayonet mount locks it onto the front of the camera. Framing the subject correctly is critical, so Sea & Sea has devised a special gunsight-type view-

er. A special mask easily attaches to the back of the camera eyepiece. When you want to center a subject in your photo, you align the circle of the mask with the tip of the triangular notch on the top of the lens. You focus by estimating the distance. At first this may seem difficult but we came up with a surefire method. First, measure 1.6 feet on your arm, starting at the tip of your index finger. When you use the Close-up Lens for the first time, find a stationary subject. Move the camera to the 1.6 foot point on your arm and move your finger to a point in front of the subject. Don't touch the subject. Move the camera back in front of your mask and shoot. After you try this a few times, you will get a feel for the right distance and will be ready to try photographing fish. Keep

(Continued on Page 110)

SKIN DIVER MAGAZINE'S

SNORKELING

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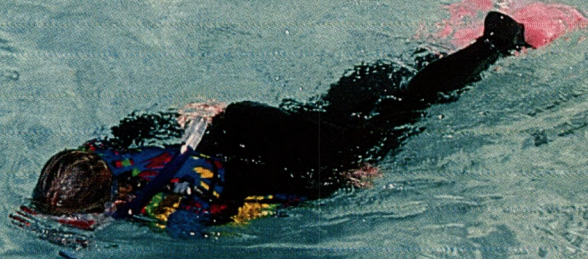
The Snorkeler's Wishlist

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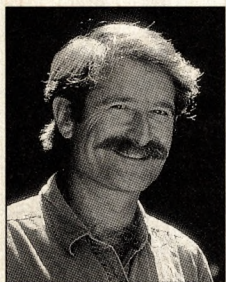
PHOTO/BILL HARRIGAN



Snorkeler's Perspective

What is Essential for Snorkelers?

BY JOEL SIMON



In this issue of Snorkeling Tourbook we focus on a variety of accessories available for today's snorkelers. As the sport evolves, so do the

products designed for our comfort, safety and education. However, to even determine what items qualify as accessories, we must decide exactly what is essential. For this I reflect on an early experience in the South Seas.

In 1985 I concluded a marine biology teaching contract with a cruise line in Suva, Fiji. As I walked down the ship's gangway, I noticed a young local man loading lumber onto a pick-up truck.

"Bula," said the fellow with a smile. "My name is Tui." Soon I was helping with the wood. As we completed the task, he politely asked me where I was going.

"Nowhere special, it's my first time in Fiji. I just want to see the country," I replied.

"Well then, why not come along with me? If you like, you can help unload the lumber," Tui said.

After three days of loading, unloading and loading the boards on trucks, buses and boats, we finally arrived at the shore of Dreketi village on the island of Qamea. The community waded into the water to welcome Tui home and assist with the cargo. One youngster wailed, believing I was an ancestral ghost, another thought I was a market purchase, like the wood, from the big city. There I stayed, living in his parent's house, for almost a month. While we transformed the planks into a sturdy open skiff, I became an active participant in village life.

The daily routine reflected the relaxed and joyous philosophy by which Fijians live their lives. Children scampered around the island in small laughing bands, sporting faded, tattered T-shirts, shorts and tiny bare feet. Perhaps they came back at night, perhaps they slept with another family. Eventually they returned home, often wear-

ing different clothes than when they left. Parents were not concerned. Among the villagers, love and care for the children was universal and shared.

The women spent much of the day working the gardens growing taro, cassava, rourou and dalo and then later prepared the dinner. In the morning, the men did their chores and Tui and I worked on the boat. In the afternoon, the men went out to spear the evening meal. I went with them. For this activity, my preparations were always the same: find mask, fins, snorkel, gloves, booties, wetsuit, white nylon cover-up, mesh fish bag and line, climb into it all and assemble my collapsible, three piece, thread-jointed aluminum and stainless steel polespear. In the meantime, the men would patiently look on with curiosity and amusement, a tiny pair of hand-carved wooden goggles dangling in one massive hand and a rusted steel shaft in the other. Thus outfitted in polyurethane, nylon and neoprene, (perhaps I did resemble a mythological specter) and my companions in faded shorts with wide bare feet toughened through experience, we simply walked into the water, swam to the nearby reef and obtained our sustenance.

Unlike Tui and his buddies, most of us don't have to snorkel to feed our children. Survival is supplanted with recreational pleasure we can enjoy and share with our families and friends. And, unlike those in remote villages, most of us have access to full service dive shops that stock a growing array of delightful accouterments designed to make snorkeling easier, safer and more enjoyable.

While I use (and appreciate) many of these items, part of snorkeling's sophistication is its simplicity. Even a modest pair of goggles can open our eyes to the wonders of the aquatic realm. The freedom of freediving is a direct expression of just how little gear is really needed to indulge in the three dimensional world of water. As I learned during those afternoons spent swimming with the my friends in Fiji, the essence of snorkeling is not reflected in fancy equipment. 🐬

Inside Snorkeling Tourbook

Brought to you by:

Joel Simon, **Editor**

Tamara Collins, **Executive Editor**

Susan Grube, **Art Director**

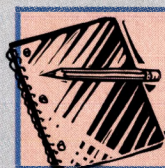
Tammy Peluso, **Contributing Editor**

Snorkeler's Gearbag



*The Snorkeler's
Wishlist: 6
Accessories
for Hours of
Enjoyment*

Tips and Techniques



*Accessorize!
Lots of Goodies
for Fun in the
Water*

Life on a Shallow Reef



*Snorkelers
Beware: Marine
Animals that Cut,
Bite and Sting*

Snorkeler's Gearbag



WRISTKEY

The Snorkeler's Wishlist: 6 Accessories for Hours of Enjoyment

COMPILED BY STAFF EDITORS

PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

AEROSKIN CALIFORNIA'S AQUASKIN 320°:

Because even tropical conditions can result in hypothermia and bare skin is subject to abrasions and stings, Aeroskin has utilized 320 denier grade P2 (Polyolefin) in its new dive-skin. The P2 fabric contains an anti-microbial agent to protect against common rashes and infections. It also has superior thermal and UV protection and features kneepads, a spinepad and flatlock and overlock stitching for comfort and durability. The Aquaskin 320° is available in black, blue, yellow, teal, fuchsia and purple for a suggested retail price of about \$115. For information on your nearest Aeroskin dealer, call (800) 368-9255.

DEEP SEE SURF SOCK:

Perfect for warm water, tropical climate snorkeling, this 3mm nylon II neoprene sock protects against fin chafing and keeps stinging marine critters away from sensitive ankles. The no sole design slips easily into a fin footpocket for an added element of cushiony comfort. The Surf Sock comes in black in men's sizes XS through XL. The Deep See Surf Sock is available for about \$16. For information on your nearest Deep See dealer, call (800) 367-2626.



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HENDERSON POLARTEC THERMAL STRETCH HOOD:

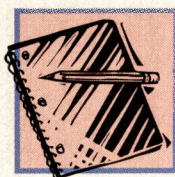
Even warm water snorkelers need a little insulation sometimes. The dilemma is whether to trade comfort and freedom of movement for warmth. With this Polartec hood you can have all three. The outer skin is abrasion resistant and windproof but breathable. It stretches in four directions for a perfect fit and is fleece lined to provide thermal insulation (equivalent to 2.5mm neoprene). The fabric has flat-lock seams that won't chafe and anti-microbial properties that resist mildew. \$53. Call (609) 825-4771 for the location of your nearest dealer.



SEAHAWK PRESS U/W ID CARDS: The key to a more memorable and fulfilling snorkel is the ability to identify the many beautiful and strange residents of the sea. Seahawk Press has

11 identification cards (there are more on the way) with the images and names of fish, invertebrates and seashells from around the world—and you can take them with you underwater. The waterproof, 9½ by 6½ inch, vinyl laminated cards are hole punched at the top for easy attachment. Each subject is drawn in full color from Jerry Greenberg's photographs. The cards can be purchased individually for \$5.50. Fax (305) 667-3572 for the location of your nearest Seahawk dealer.





Accessorize! Lots of Goodies for Fun in the Water

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOEL SIMON

In preparation for this article, I walked into one of my local dive shops, proudly announced that I was a snorkeler, not a diver, and was looking for some additional equipment. Looking up from glossy pages showing blue water splashed with colorful reef fish, a young sales attendant politely said, "Hi, my name's Phil. What do you need?"

I thought about this for a moment. It was a good question, one I'd asked myself many times without coming to a definite conclusion.

"I have what I need already," I responded, "Now I'm in the market for accessories—all the extras!"

"Oh goodie," said Phil, clasping his hands together, then closing the magazine, "you came to the right place!"

"So Phil, you have snorkeling accessories here?" I casually asked. Now it was his turn to think for a moment, which he did with an appropriate appearance of concern. First turning one way, then the other, he was surveying the store's entire inventory: colorful hanging displays, glass counter tops, the undercounter shelves, cardboard boxes and pegboard walls punctuated with masks, fins and snorkels. Then he perused the photo area, the book and magazine racks, the wetsuit area, the drysuit area, the BC area and the underwater light display.

"Yes," he said tentatively, "except that some of this stuff also gets used by divers." That worked for me. When it comes to equipment, there is indeed some overlap.

"So, I'm sure you have a mask?" he asked almost apologetically. "I know technically a mask is not an accessory, in fact, it's probably the most essential piece of equipment, but today there are so many options and features you should know about. Do you have a silicone mask? They really do last longer than the old rubber ones. And silicone makes a better seal around your face and is much more comfortable."

"Yes, I have a silicone mask," I answered. He was right. Silicone is a tremendous improvement over the older rubber masks.

Noticing my glasses, he asked, "Do you have a prescription mask or do you use contacts?"

"A prescription mask," I answered. Corrective lenses have made a world of difference to me. My recommendation: If you need them or even want them, make the investment and get them.

Estimating my age pretty accurately he continued. "Let's see, you're about bifocal age, aren't you? Got a bifocal mask yet?"

"Un-uh," I said, wagging my head. "Not quite yet."

"You can get these little plastic or glass reading lenses to put either in conventional or prescription masks. Makes a big difference. All my Dad's friends love them."

"How about a new snorkel?" he asked, waving his arm casually at the brilliant lineup. "I've got fancy purge valves top and bottom that really work, comfortable silicone mouthpieces, ergonomic curves and all different colors."

I told him I had a snorkel.

"And fins?" asked Phil. "You're probably still using those heavy old black ones that never wear out. Like the kind in our garage."

"Mine are white, otherwise you're correct," I replied. Phil showed me several new

pairs of lightweight fins ideal for snorkeling, including some with adjustable straps. These facilitate the use of neoprene booties, which protect feet and toes from abrasion. Owing to their buoyancy, they also can help keep snorkelers horizontal in the water. Booties can be invaluable for beach entries and exits, where rocks and coral rubble can be uncomfortable or worse on bare feet. Plus, they keep feet just a bit warmer.

"I appreciate the updates Phil but, remember, I've got my basic equipment already. How about some accessories?"

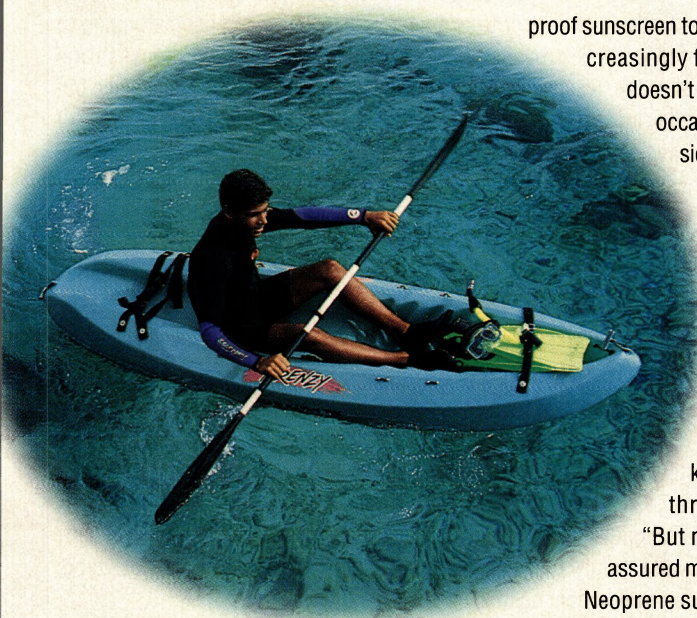
First up was the diveskin section. Many snorkelers know that floating over a coral reef is the perfect opportunity for an unforgettable sunburn. Today's choices for protecting sensitive skin range from water-

SOME ACCESSORIES FOR YOUR SNORKELING PLEASURE

Magnification lenses for your mask
Diveskins, booties and hoods
Flotation devices
Weightbelts
Emergency whistles
Kayaks and boogie boards
Depth gauges
Dive watches
Thermometers
Lanyards
Underwater lights
Disposable cameras
Waterproof plastic fish cards



Snorkelers can use a variety of accessories that make exploring the underwater world more enjoyable. There are waterproof fish identification books (right), snorkeling kayaks (below) and many different cameras (below right).



proof sunscreen to the popular full body Lycra suits. These suits come in an increasingly flamboyant array of colors and patterns. Although Lycra doesn't offer much thermal protection, it does protect from the sun, occasional stinging zooplankton or jellyfish, possible coral abrasions and other unwanted collisions that could injure bare skin. Lycra does a good job but almost any kind of attire from pajamas to long-sleeved T-shirts will offer similar protection.

Polartec and neoprene suits will help keep you warmer while snorkeling, which may be desirable even in the tropics. They come in full body or shortie versions.

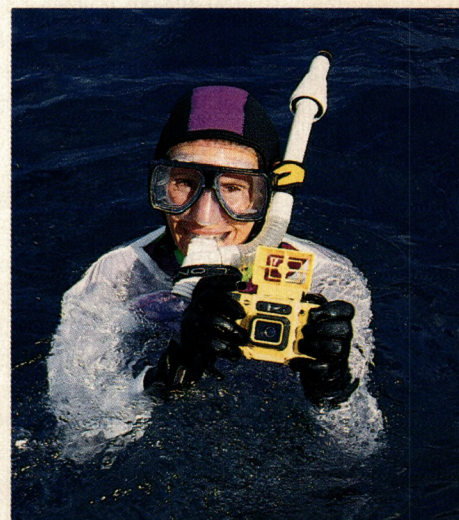
Rummaging through a box, Phil pulled out some brightly colored hoods. "These make a snorkeler more visible in the day. Did you know most body heat is lost through your head?" Phil asked. "But not when you wear a hood," he assured me.

Neoprene suits, hoods and booties will add buoyancy. For some snorkelers, the more securely they float the happier they are. Wearing foam belts around the waist or waterski type jackets can add confidence. Other snorkelers prefer to adjust their buoyancy, giving them the freedom to easily dive and explore under the water. A modest weightbelt will compensate for neoprene suits and for the natural buoyancy many people experience in salt water. Used in tandem with a lightweight inflatable snorkeling vest, this combination adds both versatility and safety. Vests are also a logical place to attach a small but powerful whistle, just in case you need to attract some attention.

Snorkelers have other options for flotation, including those that add mobility, such as kayaks and boogie boards. Kayaking is becoming increasingly popular. These lightweight, yet sturdy vessels make excellent platforms from which to explore relatively calm marine environments. Before you jump off, just make sure you know how to get back on!

"Do you surface dive, Joel? Here, take a look at this nifty little capillary depth gauge. Just wear it like a watch."

I hadn't seen one of these in years, a simple flat disk holding a clear plastic circular tube. Water enters the tube and shows the depth. It has no moving parts, yet is very accurate in the shallows and virtually indestructible—perfect for snorkelers and inexpen-



(Continued on Page 86)



Snorkelers Beware!

Marine Animals that Cut, Bite and Sting

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAMMY PELUSO

When the subject of dangerous marine creatures comes up sharks are usually the first to be mentioned—20 years later, the memory of *Jaws* lingers on. Actually, sharks are on the low end of the “danger” scale. Of the more than 250 species of sharks identified, only about 40 pose any danger to humans.

Underwater injuries are rarely intentional attacks. Most are caused by accidental collisions with the razor sharp edges of a coral head, the venom-filled spines of a scorpionfish or stingray, the stinging nematocysts of jellyfish or fire coral, or the piercing daggers of a fireworm or sea urchin.

Space and food are always in demand on the reef, creating a fiercely competitive environment. Each creature existing in this battlefield survives by using a specific attack strategy and method of defense. Many critters use camouflage, some travel in dense schools, others have developed an arsenal of weapons and deadly poisons. Luckily, few possess toxins lethal enough to kill humans; unfortunately, there are some that can cause a great deal of pain and discomfort. The good news is if you know what to look for, all can be easily avoided.

Hydroids are responsible for most snorkeling injuries; the culprits are usually fire coral, the Portuguese Man-of-War and jellyfish—all members of the phylum Cnidaria. Fire coral is one of the greatest nuisances because it is incredibly prolific and grows in a variety of forms—branching, upright and encrusting, often resembling true coral. Its smooth texture and tan coloring often make it invisible to snorkelers who accidentally brush up against the poisonous dart-like nematocysts that blanket its surface. Contact with fire coral causes painful welts on exposed skin but the sting of the Portuguese Man-of-War is dangerous. Iridescent blue gas-filled floats make this hazard easy to identify but the long strands carrying the nematocysts can extend more than 40 feet so it is occasionally felt before it is seen.

Treatment for all Cnidarian stings is essentially the same: Do not rub the wound or rinse it with fresh water—this will only activate any remaining nematocysts and cause more pain. Remove any tentacles with a towel or tweezers and flush it thoroughly with sea water. A dilute solution of alcohol or vinegar should be applied to help dissolve any remaining nematocysts. A paste of lime juice and meat tenderiz-

er may also be beneficial, however, this particular treatment can occasionally cause extreme dermatitis, so use caution.

Some of the most common underwater injuries are caused by relatively sedentary critters such as sea urchins and fish belonging to the family Scorpaenidae, which includes scorpionfish, stonefish and lionfish. Scorpionfishes and their relatives are not aggressive but they are well armed—a potent poison is stored in sacs at the base of their dorsal spines. Scorpionfish only use their weapons defensively. However, because of their uncanny ability to blend in with their surroundings, they occasionally go unnoticed until it's too late. Scorpionfish wounds are painful and allergic reactions can sometimes develop. Soaking the injury in hot water for 30 to 90 minutes will usually reduce the pain and swelling. If the sting produces a severe reaction, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Although most urchin spines do not contain poison, they are sharp and brittle and often break off under the skin. The spines are difficult to remove because of countless tiny barbs pointing upward toward the tip. Soaking the injury in the hottest water you can stand is the recommended remedy to relieve pain. You can try removing the spines with tweezers but it's likely some will remain. The body will naturally break the spines down in a few days; meat tenderizer or a dilute vinegar solution may speed up the process.

Fireworms (also called bristleworms) can cause a similar affliction. The white bristle-like structures, called setae, covering the bodies of these colorful segmented worms are sharp and venomous, causing pain, irritation and numbness. It is virtually impossible to remove embedded fireworm spines, they work their way into the skin like strands of fiberglass. The best way to treat this wound is to thoroughly dry the affected area with a hair dryer, if available, then use tape to remove any exposed pieces. A dilute solution of vinegar, ammonia or isopropyl alcohol will help the spines dissolve more quickly; meat tenderizer may also help. Rubbing aggravates the injury.

Stingrays present snorkelers with another underwater hazard they need to be aware of. So named for a sharp barb on their tails, stingrays will often bury themselves in sand, becoming virtually invisible from the surface. Although stingrays are not naturally aggressive, they will occasionally sting swimmers and snorkelers who accidentally stum-

Right: The Jewel Moray Eel (*Muraena lentiginosa*) has sharp teeth and, although it is not known to intentionally bite snorkelers, accidents can happen.




Above: The Hawaiian Turkeyfish (*Pterois sphex*) has poison in its dorsal spines. Right: The tiny polyps of Branching Fire Coral (*Millepora alcicornis*) contain stinging nematocysts. Below: The bright white tufts of a Bearded Fireworm (*Hermodice carunculata*) are venomous.



ble across them while wading through shallow water. These injuries can be serious, depending on the size and depth of the incision. The venom can cause great pain and, in extreme cases, sweating, faintness, muscle cramps and irregular or rapid heartbeat. Wash the wound thoroughly and soak it for 30 to 90 minutes in hot water. Watch the victim closely and, if serious symptoms begin to appear, seek medical attention immediately.

It's rare but fish bites do occur, usually during fish feeding fiascos. Reef fish are inherently non-aggressive toward humans, however, moray eels, groupers and Barracuda have, on occasion, been known to mistake fingers for food. The best way to avoid accidents during these scenarios is to remove all shiny jewelry before entering the water and leave the feeding to the experts. Fish bites vary in severity; in all cases it's imperative the wound be washed thoroughly and treated with topical antibiotic to prevent infection.

Few marine injuries are severe enough to require professional medical attention. However, every situation is different and needs to be evaluated accordingly. If the injury is severe or persistent, consult a physician. A first aid kit stocked with vinegar, rubbing alcohol, meat tenderizer, hot water, antibiotic salve, adhesive tape, aspirin, gauze bandages and tweezers, will give you all the tools you'll need to treat most marine injuries. As always, prevention is always the best medicine—wear a protective full-body dive suit and follow one simple rule: If you don't know what it is, don't touch it! 



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(Continued from Page 83)

sive. Phil also showed me some economical digital dive watches and small submersible thermometers.

He was on a roll. "Now that we're talking wrists, look at these adjustable lanyards. You can easily fasten anything onto your wrist with these." I asked Phil for a few examples.

UNDERWATER LIGHTS: There is an assortment of small submersible dive lights ideal for snorkeling. These can be used in the day, especially for illuminating dark areas under coral ledges and, of course, for night snorke-

ling. Before purchasing a light, be sure you understand its operation, maintenance and battery life. Some fancy lights burn bright but for a short time or require specialized batteries and bulbs that can be difficult to find in remote areas. In general, a small, simple light is best.

DISPOSABLE CAMERAS: Snorkelers can be enthusiastic underwater photographers. A wide variety of cameras can be used while snorkeling but the small single use models tend to be the most popular. They are relatively inexpensive, easy to use and can produce surprisingly pleasant images. They are also easily carried on a wrist while in the



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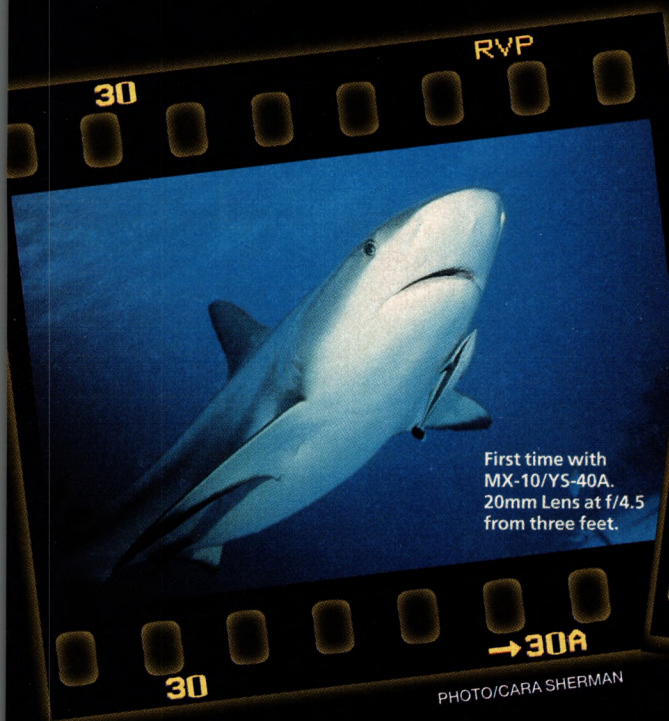
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water. Check to see if your chosen camera includes its own elastic wrist strap or some other method of securing.


WATERPROOF PLASTIC FISH CARDS: This is one of my personal favorites. Little colorful drawings (or photos) of the most prevalent reef fish (and invertebrates) make identification immediate and a lot of fun. Fish ID cards are available in several editions: Caribbean, Hawaiian, Australian, etc. In addition to the cards, there are also waterproof fish ID books that can even be used while snorkeling. And Phil is right, a wrist lanyard is an ideal way to carry these cards around in the water.

This put us in the instructional media section of the store, where a variety of magazines, videotapes, CD-ROMs and books on

marine life are available.

"These resources are as valuable to snorkelers as they are for divers," said Phil picking up the magazine he was reading when I first walked in. "Here, take a look at this for example," he said with a sly smile. He leafed through a few pages, then opened up to the Snorkeling Tourbook Editorial page! We had a good laugh over that. He'd suspected all along that my goal was information rather than purchases.

With Phil's valuable assistance, we defined many snorkeling accessories and agreed that, at least for some, divers could use them, too.

We continued our tour through the racks of gear. My guide was never at a loss for words or enthusiasm as we explored snorkeling applications for a variety of submersible equipment. 

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ADVANCED DIVING

Scientific Diving Defined

BY JEANNE BEAR SLEEPER

Scientists scuba dive to gather information. This might include collecting samples, observing animal behavior, recording which organisms inhabit an area, searching for artifacts or photographing underwater habitats or organisms. Like recreational divers, some scientific diving is for the purpose of merely seeing what's there and looking for new critters, behaviors and underwater formations.

Diving under the auspices of an educational institution, governmental agency or nongovernmental agency is often conducted in a different manner than a recreational dive. There are many more guidelines and restrictions and more stringent training requirements. Some university programs require 100 hour long scuba certification courses with rigorous watermanship and academic testing and a full medical examination every one to three years. Educational institutions have

diving control boards that monitor compliance with detailed policies and procedures. The diving safety officer is responsible for ensuring that divers follow the regulations and meet competency requirements. Working scientific divers cannot be worried about how to scuba dive—their focus is data collection.

Other rule setting and enforcing entities include the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Worker's Compensation and insurance carriers. General guidelines for scientific divers are promulgated by the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS). Military diving regulations incorporate many of these agencies' concepts but, owing to the nature of its mission, the military ultimately establishes its own protocol. Military diving is not gen-

erally considered scientific diving.

All groups setting guidelines for scientific diving share the common goal of diver safety. Scientific diving takes place in every possible underwater environment. Some spots are pretty nasty. Few are in clear, calm, tropical water. Researchers need to collect data at regular intervals and in specific locations. Similar to the post office, neither rain, nor sleet nor snow can stop them from making a dive. Low visibility, fast currents, cold water, big swells, surge, wind and all that Mother Nature can dish up are everyday,

on the job challenges for a diving researcher.

Scientists use specialized equipment, assistants and established procedures when collecting data. Their actions need to be repeatable, accurate, quantifiable and documented. The samples collected need highly accurate notations, such as where the sample was collected, method of

collection, depth, water temperature, light, salinity and relationship to other similar and dissimilar organisms or data.

Archaeologists locate a potential artifact site, then invest many dives placing a grid system over the area, drawing and photographing items in situ. Where the items lie in relation to one another may be meaningful. The very last underwater step is artifact removal. Then begins the tedious surface tasks of cataloguing, identifying, cleaning and preserving artifact. Scientists frequently spend 5 to 20 hours on the surface or in the lab for every hour spent underwater.

Research projects are typically funded by grants and there is never enough money for all the projects scientists would like to do. Applying for a grant is a slow, painstaking process. Unless your ongo-

scientific method (noun)

The principles and empirical processes of discovery and demonstration considered characteristic of or necessary for scientific investigation, generally involving the observation of phenomena, the formulation of an hypothesis concerning the phenomena, experimentation to demonstrate the truth or falseness of the hypothesis, and a conclusion that validates or modifies the hypothesis.

ing salary is paid by a business or educational institution, there are often lean times between grants and projects. Your commitment to underwater scientific research must be steadfast to survive the highs and lows of failed experiments, inconsistent data and insufficient fundings.

Maintaining a diving program is expensive. Diving control boards are responsible for training, testing and supervising all diving activities. Tanks, regulators, compressors, dive boats, vehicles, swimming pools, research labs and never ending material and supply needs add up to big dollars even before staff wages and office costs are tacked on. Rarely are people hired just because they are divers, even if they have a comprehensive logbook. A business or school hires a biologist or chemist who also is a certified, and hopefully experienced, diver. Multi-talented and trained people have an easier time finding employment.

Some programs use volunteer recreational scuba divers to assist with scientific projects. These are great opportunities for young divers to get a look at the world of professional work that involves diving. In most instances, the volunteer diver pays a fee for room and board in the project's remote location and works long, hard hours for free. Don't forget to sign up early because these choice spots go fast!

Volunteer divers on scientific projects (as opposed to a local one day beach cleanup) need specialized skills. It is common for projects to require first aid and CPR certification, open water scuba certification, presentation of a logbook with at least 50 dives in varying conditions, strong swimming skills, a medical exam and approval for diving, passing a written theory exam, providing all dive gear and signing a detailed legal document: (Acknowledgment of the Risks). Volunteers are expected to abide by the diving operations and safety rules and regulations of the sponsoring organization.

SUMMARY

The pursuit of scientific knowledge and the joy of the underwater environment have combined to become a lifelong career for many divers. This is a path with many rules but unlimited horizons. It is a constant challenge to find funding but a reward of immeasurable proportion to name a newly discovered marine organism. Scientific diving is one tool used by researchers in their quest for knowledge.

For more information, write to the American Academy of Sciences, 430 Nahant, Nahant, Massachusetts 01908; (617) 599-7114. 🐟

TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 52)

as far as desired.

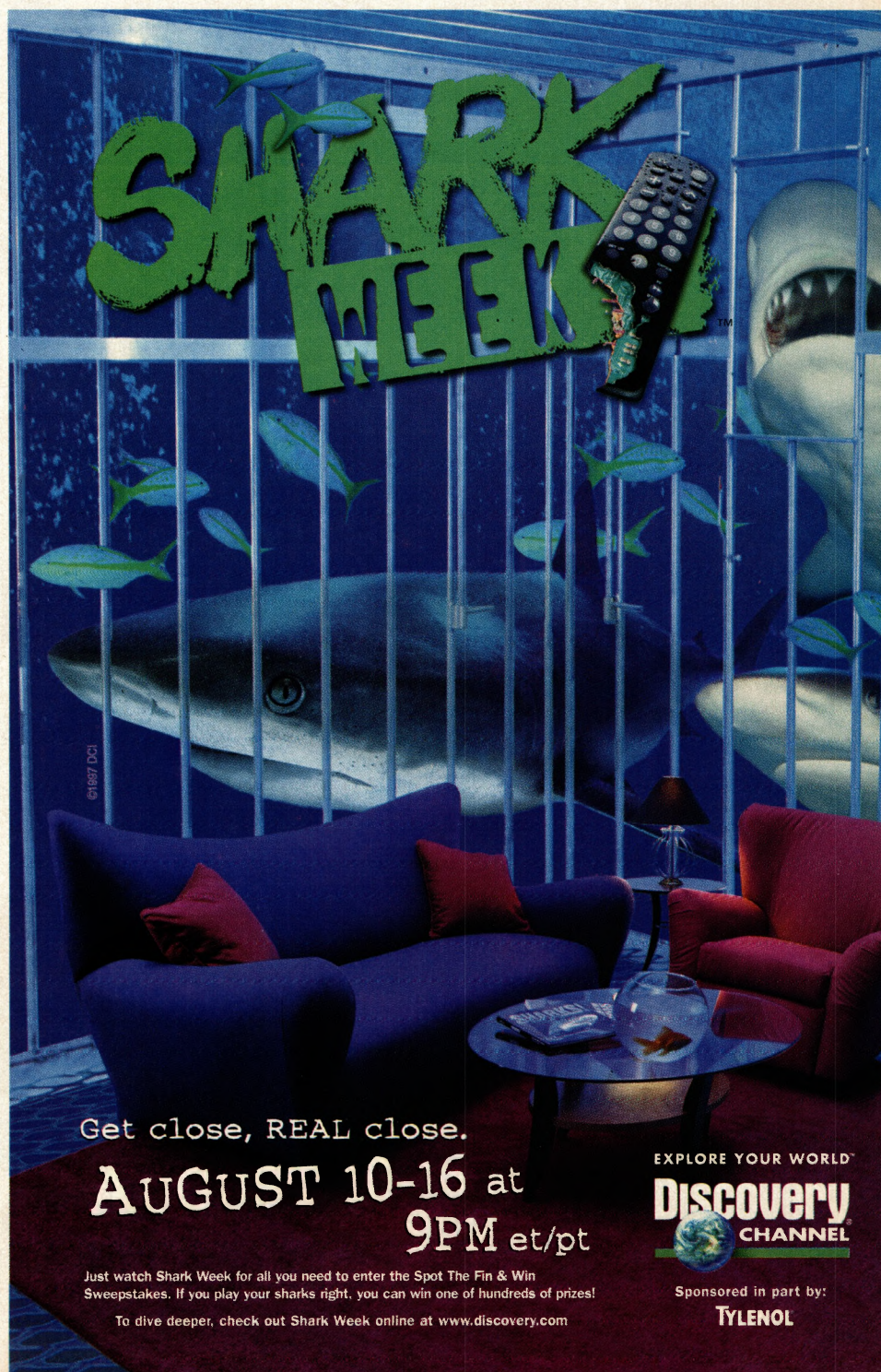
Be with Technifacts next month for more techniques that have been tested and proven helpful for entering and exiting the water from the shore.

DIVING BY THE BOOK

In almost all sports, the ultimate learning tool is personal experience. However, reading diving and related publications can enhance diving skills and safety. I feel strongly that skills learned in breathhold

diving will lead to a heightened degree of watermanship and greater dive safety. The *Australian Freediving and Spearfishing News* is for freedivers and underwater hunters. It is a quality magazine of international news, stories about freediving equipment, interviews with great divers and reminiscences of the past. For details, write to Barry Andrewartha, AFD-SN, P. O. Box 167, Narre Warren, Victoria 3805, Australia.

Several readers have requested a source for back issues of SKIN DIVER Magazine. David Way wrote, "I have available a varying number of back is-



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
TECHNIFACTS

sues." Also in Way's latest 20 page catalog are hundreds of other listings of diving publications. Included are several titles on freediving, underwater swimming, snorkeling and other related books that will improve basic watermanship. To receive this valuable source of out of print diving information send \$1 U.S. to David Way, The Divers and Watersportsman's Library, 10 Cedar Road, Preston, Paignton, Devon, TQ3 2DD, England.

THE HUMAN BODY AND PRESSURE

Several months ago a reader wrote asking for information on the physiological and physical effects of pressure on the human body during a dive. This reader also wanted to know if the helmet equipped diver was affected by same pressure changes as a scuba diver. First, an answer to the last part of the reader's question. Yes, any diver subjected to the pressure of the water will experience the same physical and physiological effects of the pressure. The effects will depend to some extent on the breathing gas used and the total pressure (depth) of the dive. Also, in some cases, the duration of the dive may influence the effects of the breathing gas. Best Publishing Company, Flagstaff, Arizona 86003-0100 has several publications dealing with this subject. Write to P. O. Box 30100, for its latest catalog of related subjects.

This reader also asked, "I am particularly interested in...surgical procedures for improving my ability to deal with pressure." I feel rather strongly that a diver in need of surgery to deal with pressure should not consider diving. One of the prime requirements for diving is that the prospective diver can readily equalize pressure and that he/she will not be adversely affected by the physiological effects of the dive.

The science and practice of all phases of diving are changing almost daily. Technifacts readers are urged to keep in touch with SKIN DIVER and publishers of books related to diving. Visit your library and check its publications on diving. Libraries can often order books for their readers. Regardless of the source, read and study. Think about diving techniques that can, with practice, improve your diving skills and lead to a greater ability in the water. You will be glad you did. 

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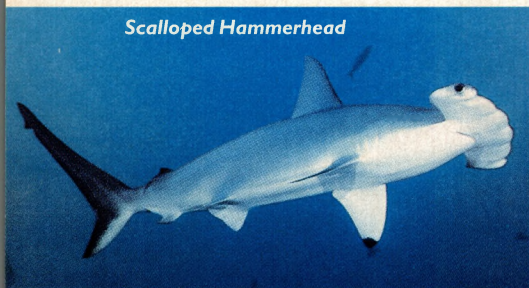
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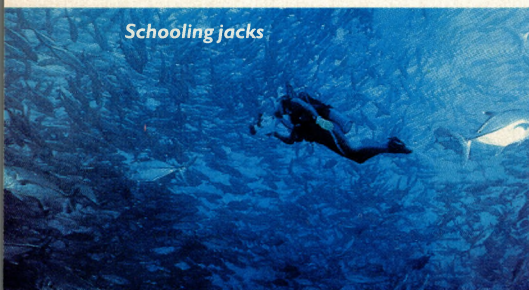
Redlipped Batfish



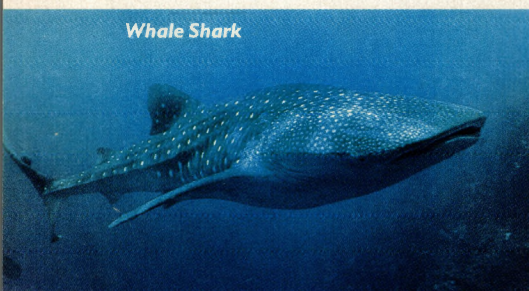
Scalloped Hammerhead



Manta Rays



Schooling jacks



Whale Shark



Sailfish

Top Ten Reasons to Dive Coco Island

COSTA RICA'S UNTAMED WILDERNESS

BY JIM WALKER
PHOTOS BY AVI KLAPFER

One of the many reasons (besides diving) I enjoy my work is the people I meet. For example, there are my friends, and two of the most sincere and respected people in the diving industry, Avi Klapfer and Yosy Naaman. Captains and owners of the two vessel *Hunter* fleet, they have been around the world—from the Red Sea to Micronesia—captaining live-aboards much the way most of us drive cars. And, if they were to maintain cars the way they maintain their live-aboards, they would be impeccable—clean and comfortable and in excellent working order, just like the live-aboards, the *Sea Hunter* and the *Undersea Hunter*.

Having a captain and owner you respect and trust is number one in my book when thinking about any live-aboard trip. There are also many other things to consider when booking a live-aboard for the adventure of a lifetime. The top ten reasons I would go to Coco Island (off the coast of Costa Rica) with the *Sea Hunter* and the *Undersea Hunter* are:

1 COCO ISLAND IS WILD AND PRISTINE. Approximately 300 miles southwest of the port of Puntarenas on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica, Coco lies below the hurricane belt. The island is mountainous, with almost sheer cliffs, has no aircraft landing strip, is almost inaccessible and covered with waterfalls. Yes, Coco is wild and pristine.

2 THERE IS AN INCREDIBLE VARIETY OF MARINE LIFE, BOTH BIG AND SMALL. From dolphins, Manta Rays and Hammerheads to Harlequin Shrimp and Redlipped Batfish, the variety of marine life found at Coco is some of the most unusual and diverse found anywhere in the world. Hammerheads school in the hundreds, dolphins, Manta and Mobula Rays make the unusual a common occurrence. There is marine life for every type of photographer and videographer and plenty of it.

3 EVERY TRIP IS UNIQUE. Some people return to Coco year after year. Why not? One year there might be Whale Sharks, the next Orcas, mating sharks, a shark giving birth or even a Sailfish sighting. All of these are unique: At Coco the unusual is common and guests can expect the unexpected.

4 LIFE ABOARD THESE LIVE-ABOARDS IS NEVER DULL. During one trip a photographer kept getting closer and closer to a Manta Ray at a site called **Dirty Rock**. The photographer was getting great shots of the Manta's wide open mouth when the strobe cable snagged on the animal's cephalic fin and the Manta took off with \$7,000 worth of camera gear. Hunter fleet trips are a lot of fun and Captain P.J. keeps things light and

(Continued on Page 114)

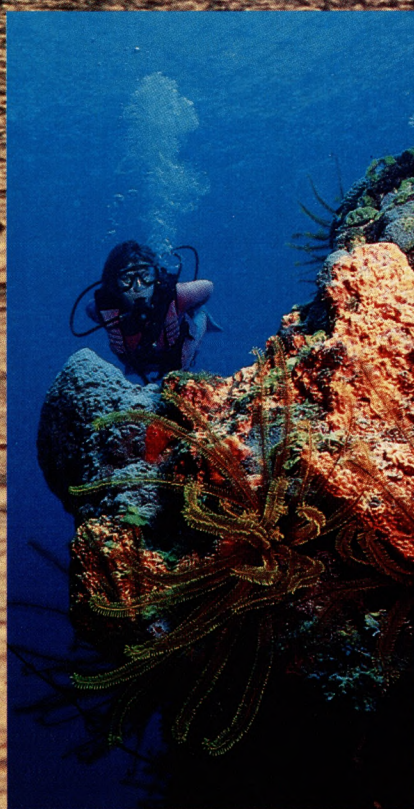


Captain
Avi Klapfer

photo/Geri Murphy

DOMINICA

T H E W A T E R I S L A N D



Your Official Guide to
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Diving



Dominica, the Water Island, is blessed by both the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean Sea on its western shores and the nutrient rich waters of the Atlantic on its eastern side. These two factors, combined with dramatic walls that plunge 1,000 feet down, directly offshore make Dominica the undisputed diving capital of the Eastern Caribbean as well as one of the most unusual and popular dive locations in the world!

The lush, beautiful scenery that characterizes the topside Dominican rainforest continues beneath its waters. You will find dense, pristine coral reefs, among the richest in the world. Orange and yellow sponges abound, as well as prolific schools of fish. Daily sight-

ings of batfish, seahorses, flying gurnards and all colors of frogfish are not uncommon. There is wall diving, pinnacle diving, reef exploration, wrecks and even two hot springs dives, where you can observe, firsthand, Dominica's volcanic origins. On these dives, you actually see thousands of tiny bubbles rising to the surface from subterranean volcanic activity and feel the water temperature increase dramatically! Experts rate Dominica as a "must-see" experience for divers of all experience levels.

Diving is conducted by a number of professional facilities, all exceeding international standards set by diving agencies such as PADI, NAUI, SSI and CMAS. Training and open water referral courses are available in addition to regularly scheduled, daily trips to the reefs. The entire western side of Dominica plays host to diving activities. The following is a brief glimpse of the attractions in the three most popular areas:

Portsmouth Area (the northern part of the island): Sloping drop-offs are the key here, with most of the diving done in the areas around Douglas Bay and Toucari Bay. There is open cavern diving at Toucari and a hot springs dive as well as the rich corals and sponges that dominate all as-

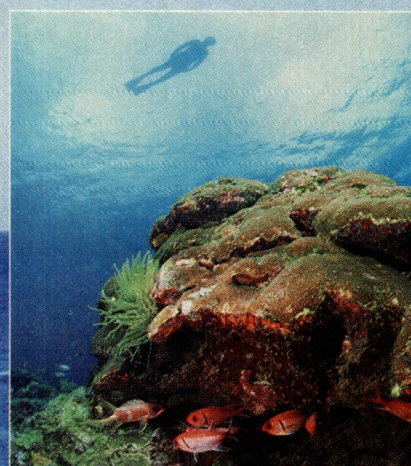
pects of Dominica diving.

New dive sites are discovered regularly in this area.

Middle Grounds (Grand Savanne area): Coral gardens and spur and groove coral formations abound in this area, most just a few minutes from shore. There are abundant sponges and invertebrate life; this is a macro photographer's favorite. There are more than a dozen beautiful dive/snorkel sites in this area of Dominica.

Scotts Head (southern tip of the island): A gigantic submerged volcanic crater is the star of the show here. There are 25 plus dive/snorkel sites; you will find pinnacles, seamounts, walls, and shallow reefs that feature astounding color and incredibly diverse marine life.

While many of the popular diving islands in the Caribbean are mainly coral, Dominica's lush undersea landscape is



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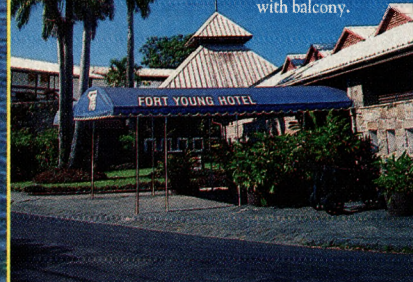
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Dive services provided by Dive Dominica



built on a hard, granite substrate. The corals and sponges actually grow on top of the granite and, over the centuries, have come to resemble traditional coral reefs. But the convergence of the Atlantic and Caribbean Sea, and the richness of Dominica topside, all contribute to a unique type of underwater environment not found anywhere else in the world.

Although schedules differ by operator, most diving is done in the morning, with the afternoons free to explore the Water Island topside. Additional diving, for both individuals and groups, can be arranged with the operators.

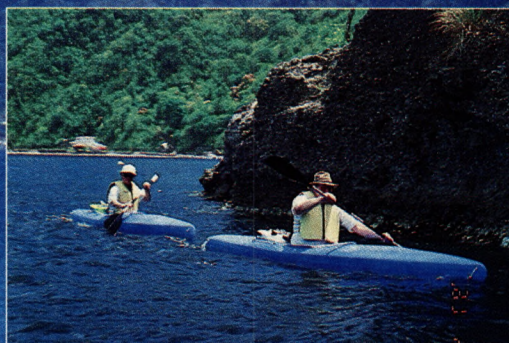
Dominica also offers top-notch snorkeling and, given the closeness of the reefs to shore and to the dive operations, the snorkel sites are never very far away. Snorkelers can join one of the dive boat parties (the captains and crew will steer you to the best snorkeling areas), participate in special snorkel excursions and even snorkel and explore Dominica by kayak. Since the western side of the island (where all diving and snorkeling is done) is the leeside, the water is nearly always calm and perfect for snorkeling, kayaking or both. In all, there are 28 separate snorkel areas off the island. Snorkelers may bring their own gear or use that supplied by the dive/snorkel operators.

Snorkelers can explore, firsthand, the underwater hot springs at Champagne and Toucari. They can also explore Coral Gardens off Salisbury. Meander along the southern shoreline of Scotts Head and marvel at the outrageous colors of the more than 190 species of fish that call Dominica home. Combine that with the unique

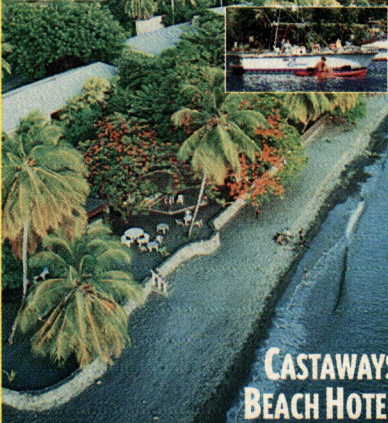
Snorkeling

underwater colors of the Water Island (orange and yellow sponges and densely packed schools of rainbow colored fish) and you will find a first class snorkeling experience awaiting you in Dominica.

Snorkeling is available in all three areas of the island (Portsmouth, Middle Ground and Scotts Head) and experienced snorkelers will find abundant marine life, prolific corals and interesting formations in very shallow water. Snorkelers, like divers, will find the combination of underwater exploration and topside adventure (hiking, visiting waterfalls and hot springs and observing nature) unbeatable on this island.



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Champagne North (S)
- 2** Long Reef (D,S)
Tube Reef (D,S)
Wall Dive (D,S)
Boulder Rock (D,S)
- 3** Cannon Site (D,S)
Five Finger Rock (D,S)
Anchor Point (D,S)
- 4** Wreck of the Pia (D,S)
Pinnacles (D)
- 5** Barracuda (D)
Main Crater (D)
Turtle Point (D)
Trumpet Reef (D,S)
Sulfur Springs (Multiple site-D,S)
- 6** Secret Beach (S)
- 7** Rena's Hole (D)
Coral Garden (D,S)
- 8** Whale Shark Reef (D)
Nose Reef (D)
Brain Coral Reef (D)
Lauro Reef (D,S)
Salisbury Cave (D,S)
- 9** Berry's Dream (D)
Castaways Reef (D)
Maggie's Point (D)
Mushroom Rock (S)
- 10** Rodney's Rock (D,S)
- 11** Tug Wreck (D)
- 12** Champagne (D,S-three sites)
Point Guignard (D,S)
- 13** Dangleben's North (D)
Coral Gardens South (D,S)
Dangleben's Pinnacle (D,S-2 sites)
L'Abym (D,S)
La Sorciere (D,S)
Soufriere Pinnacles (D,S)
- 14** Cachacrou Pinnacle (D)
Scotts Head Pinnacle (D)
Swiss Cheese (D)
Scotts Head Point (D,S)
Condo (D)
Mountain Top (D)
Scotts Head Drop-off (D)
- 15** Village (D)
- 16** Suburbs (D)
- 17** Lost Horizons (D)

D- Dive Site
S- Snorkel Site
D,S- Dive, Snorkel Site

Historical Hot Spots

- 20** Cabrits National Park - Fort Shirley
- 21** Macoucherie Rum Factory
- 22** Old Mill Cultural Center
- 23** Botanical Gardens and Aviary
- 24** Dominica Museum
- 25** City of Roseau Architecture
- 26** Fort Cachacrou

Waterfalls & Hot Springs

- 27** Layou River Hot Springs
- 28** Emerald Pool
- 29** Titou Gorge
- 30** Trafalgar Falls (two waterfalls)
- 31** Wooten Waven Sulfur Springs
- 32** Valley of Desolation Sulfur Springs
- 33** Victoria Falls
- 34** Sari Sari Falls
- 35** Soufriere Sulfur Springs
- 37** Middleham Falls

Hiking, Biking, River Tours

- 37** Morne Aux Diablies
- 38** Indian River Tours
- 39** Parrot Habitat
- 40** Syndicate Nature Trail
- 41** Morne Diablotin Trail
- 42** Jacko Steps
- 43** Carib Territory
- 44** L'Escalier Tete Chien (The Snakes Staircase)
- 45** "Indian Jones" Style Bridge
- 46** Rodney's Rock
- 47** Point Casse Hike and Bike Tour
- 48** Morne Trois Piton Trail
- 49** Boeri Lake Hike
- 50** Freshwater Lake Hike
- 51** Boiling Lake and the Valley of Desolation

GEARING UP

Since Dominica is so mountainous, it creates its own unique weather patterns, ranging from wet and cool to dry and sunny within only a few miles. Here are a few tips to help you gear up properly:

- The dry season is January to April. Things get wetter from July to October.
- Temperatures range from 75 to 85°F, with cooler nights in the mountains.
- Lightweight, cool casual wear is best overall. Don't forget lightweight rainwear and good sturdy footwear for hiking.
- Bring waterproof bags or sturdy plastic bags to protect camera gear during boat rides and hikes in the rainforest.

GETTING THERE

The two best options from the U.S. are:

1. American Airlines flies to Dominica via San Juan, PR, followed by an American Eagle flight to Melville Hall Airport. This airport is on the east side of the island, requiring a one to two hour transfer (depending on weather and location) to hotels on the west coast. Your ride will take you through the picturesque Central Forest Reserve.
2. If you want a shorter trip to your hotel after you land, you may want to take an American flight to Antigua, St. Maarten or Barbados and then board a Cardinal Airlines flight, which flies to Canefield Airport, only a five minute drive from Roseau. You can reach Cardinal by calling (809) 449-0322 / 8922 or ask your travel specialist to help set it up.

DOMINICA Tourism Offices

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Dominica



Hiking

Topside, the Water Island of Dominica more than lives up to its name. The rugged landscape (it features the highest mountains of any island in the Caribbean) catches the clouds other islands miss and the water journey that blesses the entire island begins in the high-land areas. This island is rainforest, home to myriad forms of flora and fauna, and its mountainous terrain, waterfalls, hot springs, rivers and lakes make for spectacular touring, hiking, mountain biking and more.

Dominica is served by a network of well maintained roads, making topside access to the National Parks, Forest Reserve System, trails and special sites just a short trip from your lodgings. There are hikes and trails suited for all levels



of experience, from those just out for a casual nature stroll (Emerald Pool, Trafalgar Falls and the Layou River tours) to those who wish to test their endurance with full day excursions to the Boiling Lake and Mt. Diablotin. In between there are numerous trails (more are being discovered each year) that lead to waterfalls, natural hot springs that soothe and relax, inland lakes and river tours. Seek out the indigenous Sisserou and Jaco parrot, at home in its primary rainforest territory, or merely take a nature hike with one of Dominica's well trained guides. The guides come highly recommended and provide transportation to and from the trail systems. In addition, they will accompany you on the tours and are well versed in the flora and fauna of this wonderfully beautiful island.

While touring is quite established here, do not expect (particularly on the more rugged trails) to see many other visitors while exploring. Dominica is a large island as the Caribbean goes and with so many trails you will find yourself thinking you might be the first ever to see some of the falls, rivers and mountain vistas.

Water, of course, is at center stage in



topside exploration of Dominica. You could easily visit a different waterfall on each day of a ten day stay and never see the same one twice! They range from small ones (such as Emerald Pool), just a 40 foot drop, and invite you to bathe in their cool and refreshing spray.

Then there are the towering falls of Middleham, Sari Sari and Trafalgar—these giants (easily several hundred feet) will inspire awe! The rivers of Dominica (particularly the Layou and the Indian) offer a gentler experience, whether explored from shore or by boat. And, the inland lakes are home to diverse species of birds as well as bathing you in a serene glow, which lasts



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Whale Watching

much longer than your stay in Dominica.

Typical excursions take a morning, afternoon or full day. As noted, it's best to do all of the excursions with a guide and you are encouraged to let your guide know of any personal wishes you might have! He or she can tailor a hike or excursion to any level of fitness and can also round out the nature hike with swimming, picnicking, stopping at a local restaurant or a visit to local artisans and woodcrafters. In short, exploring Dominica is a very personal experience and don't ever expect to see a bullhorn or public address system! It's not the Dominica style. Instead, think in terms of small groups of two to eight people exploring the mountains, gorges and rivers. This is the style of Dominica: Small, personal and committed to delivering the best possible nature experience.

Of any island in the Caribbean,

Dominica offers the naturalist, hiker, bird-watcher and nature lover the most complete and varied menu of activities and experiences. Combined with the stunning vistas underwater, it is easy to see how Dominica earned its two most popular nicknames, Nature Island and Water Island.

In recent years, Dominica has also developed a well deserved reputation for whale watching. Again, its unique combination of Atlantic and Caribbean water makes the island a magnet for migrating whale populations. The great whales, always restless and moving from one area to another, use the island as a navigational checkpoint in their travels.

Whale watching also takes place on the



western (calm side) of the island, so there's rarely a worry about seasickness or rough conditions. The whales are sometimes seen just several hundred yards offshore but more commonly you will see (and hear them) on their migratory routes two to five miles offshore. The sea is still gentle there and many of the boats are outfitted with hydrophones, which allow you to hear the whales pinging (and in the case of the humpbacks, also singing) before you actually see

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them. The whales are not disturbed by the tours and the operators show both great skill and respect for the whales. And, the whales return each year.

Sperm whales are very rare creatures, seldom seen elsewhere, even by determined ocean explorers. In Dominica, they are rather common, just another example of the tremendous uniqueness and biodiversity this island offers!

In Dominica, when you combine the Water Island with the wonders of the Nature Island, you get a unique, wonderful visit that can only be described in terms of yet another nickname, the Adventure Island. Snorkeling, diving, hiking, rainforests, birds, fauna, kayaking and the more recent development of biking and sportfishing combine to define the Dominica experience. It is for the young and young at heart. Don't look for casinos and nightlife, the adventure in Dominica takes place during the day and you are usually tired enough to just enjoy a good meal and turn in early for the next day's adventure!



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Photo: Stuart Westmorland

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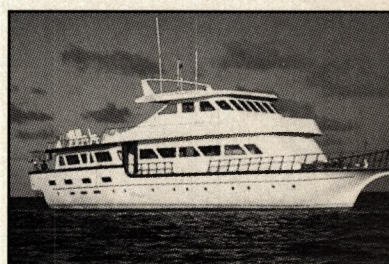


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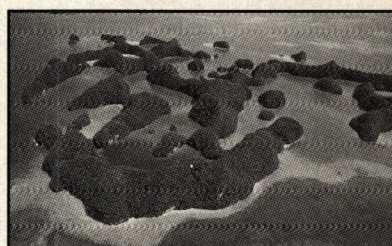


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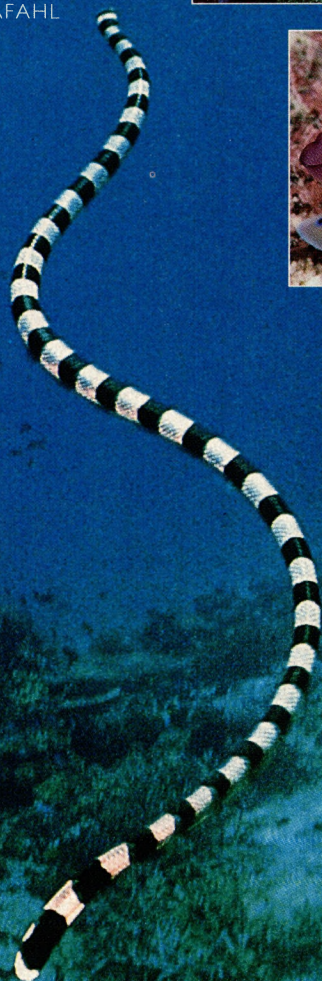
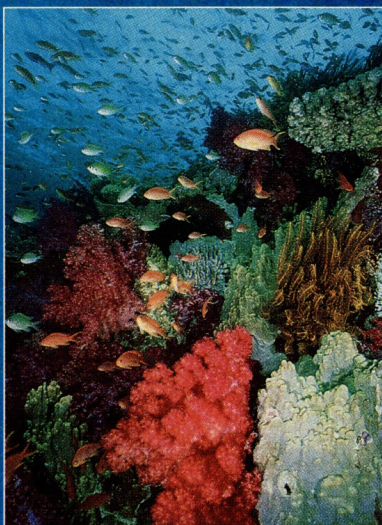
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Dive Taveuni

Fiji's Answer to the Exotic and Sublime

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



Almost 25 years ago, Ric Cammick discovered the underwater world of Fiji's Somosomo Strait, between the islands of Vanua Levu and Taveuni. A tremendous amount of nutrient rich water flows through this strait during the tidal exchange. The reefs come alive and the soft corals display their true colors for divers to witness.

Ric and his wife Do decided this was definitely the place to set up a diving operation. Together they built a seven acre wonderland perched on the grassy knoll overlooking the Somosomo Strait. Dive Taveuni features six *bures*, traditional Fijian cottages, nestled into beautifully landscaped tropical gardens.

There are three styles of *bures*. Most have unique outdoor showers, some have rock interior walls, while others have courtyards walled with river stones. Each has its own private deck so you can relax and enjoy the breathtaking Fijian sunsets.

The Cammicks' resort makes you feel like an invited guest sharing their warm hospitality rather than just a visitor to Dive Taveuni. Before dinner, drinks are served in the spacious living room of the mainhouse. Here you can relax in an overstuffed chair and recap the diving events of the day.

All meals are served on the outside patio (weather permitting) so everyone can enjoy a panoramic view of the strait. Tables are set with fine china in the shape of sea shells, with highly polished silver place settings and crystal wine



glasses. Of course, there are always beautiful flower arrangements to add that touch of color. A variety of foods is offered, ranging from traditional local dishes made with curry or coconut milk to fish, chicken, vegetables, pastas and salads. Of course, the desserts are delicacies not to be missed!

A freshwater swimming pool was re-

Left: A Banded Seasnake heads through the nutrient rich waters of the Somosomo Strait to breathe at the surface. Inset top: Fiji's reefs are riotous with colorful corals, sponges, crinoids and fish. Inset middle: A *Chromodoris kunei nudibranch*. Above: Dive Taveuni is nestled within the dense flora that adorns the island of Taveuni.

cently added to the property. It sits right at the edge of the cliff, giving the illusion of swimming at the edge of the world. There are several sundecks with umbrellas to allow you to relax, read or just sit back and take in the view.

So far everything sounds great, right? Well, it gets even better. Let's talk about the diving. Dive Taveuni offers visits to more than 30 sites in the Rainbow Reef area of the Somosomo Strait. Ric, his son, Doug, and the competent dive crew led by Tyrone Valentine, have spent years figuring out the best time to dive these site. They time it so the soft corals are open yet the currents are minimal. They make current diving a positive experience that rates a definite 10 in your log book.

Dive Taveuni's *Lelewai* is a 40 foot aluminum catamaran with plenty of room for divers and all their gear. It has a covered deck, spacious cabins and a place to re-



SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Dive Taveuni is best known for:

- Diving the Somosomo Strait
- Intense concentrations of soft corals
- Drift diving
- Privacy and serenity

lax in the sun. Travel time to the sites from the resort is less than one hour. After your first dive the boat anchors near a secluded beach so you can snorkel or relax in the sand during your surface interval. Lunch is prepared onboard, served in the main cabin and then you are off for another thrilling dive. Once your dive gear is stored onboard you can forget about it, the crew washes it and has it dry and ready for the next day. Life doesn't get much easier.

The most sought after dive in the strait is the **Great White Wall**. This is a dive of a lifetime, although most of the thrill only takes seconds because of the current. When you enter the water, you quickly make your way to the bottom at 40 feet. You battle the current head on until you come to a tunnel, which allows you to view the Great White Wall when you exit at about 120 feet. Here you will see a massive wall carpeted with white soft corals waving in the current.

There are other magnificent dive sites
(Continued on Page 126)

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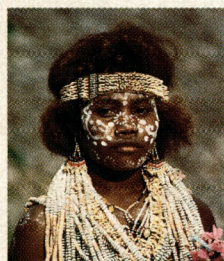
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The Solomons

ISLANDS LOST IN TIME

BY ASTRID WITTE AND CASEY MAHANEY



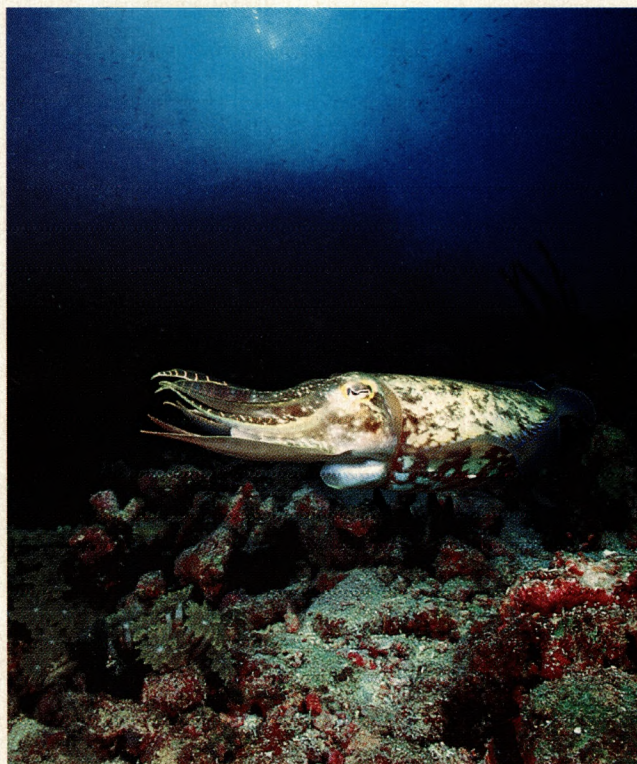
As we explore more and more exotic destinations, we find ourselves wanting to return to what is one of the few last frontiers on earth—the Solomon Islands. Here, in this vast chain of more than 900 islands and atolls, every detail was created to true paradisiacal perfection. A soothing sense of peacefulness, nurtured by a tranquil pace and endless natural beauty, hovers

over the islands and slowly engulfs the visitor. The native people are refreshingly welcoming and happy, while continuing to follow the same self-supporting lifestyle as their ancestors.

The diving is spectacular wherever you go, offering awe-inspiring sheer walls, truly virgin reefs, intriguing WW II wrecks and some of the planet's richest marine life.

When traveling the Solomons, I believe divers should visit at least a couple of different island groups, since each area's dive sites and cultural and historical highlights are unique.

In the world's largest lagoon, stunning Marovo, the small island of Uepi beckons with a cozy resort. Here you will feel as if you're stranded on a tropical island, yet with all the essential creature comforts at your disposal. Although all dive sites near Uepi are superb, the island has become famous for an incredible Manta experience. At **Manta Point** a school of perhaps



Top: The surreal paradise island of Tavanipupu in Marau Sound. **Inset left:** A young woman dressed in traditional bridal attire: shell money and dolphin and possum teeth jewelry. **Above:** A cuttlefish hovers over a coral encrusted reef.

more than 100 Pygmy Mantas roams the territory. As a photographer, the only thing you have to worry about is how to get all these graceful creatures in your viewfinder. At **Monggo Passage** an enormous, absolutely breathtaking drop-off awaits, with patrolling sharks, colorful soft corals and a wonderful hard coral garden. **Uepi Pier** may not sound too glamorous but it offers some great macro life, along with schooling fish, massive gorgonians and, occasionally, sharks.

Roviana Lagoon, once a stronghold for headhunting activities, is now the Solomons' soft coral capital. Our personal fa-

SBD Dauntless Dive Bomber, recently discovered by Dave Cooke from Solomon Sea Divers. He also managed to locate the pilot, Lieutenant James W. Dougherty, who escaped from his burning plane in 1943. With Cooke's help 52 years later, Dougherty was once again able to sit in his plane's cockpit, now 30 feet underwater.

Dave and Mariana, who operate Solomon Sea Divers out of Munda, continue to search for new dive sites and their latest discovery is a phenomenal cave. Divers enter at the shore, then descend a tunnel that eventually spills out

onto the open reef.

Roviana Lagoon is also known for its cultural significance. Skull Island conceals the Solomons' most intact ancestral shrine from the headhunting days and Rendova Harbor features a small John F. Kennedy museum, displaying many artifacts from WW II.

The island gem of Gizo offers some excellent and varied diving. For WW II buffs, Adventure Sports offers trips to some interesting wreck dives, including a **Hellcat**, **Japanese Zero** and the **Toa Maru**, which, for many, is the highlight of Gizo diving. The huge Japanese transport was



The John F. Kennedy museum in Roviana's Rendova Harbor features artifacts from WW II.



Crocodiles are found mainly in the Russells but sometimes off Guadalcanal and Roviana.

vorite dive is **Mushroom Island**, where a sheer, partially undercut wall offers clusters of huge soft coral trees in all imaginable colors. **Shark Point** is another impressive vertical wall, which drops thousands of feet into the abyss. When the current is right, Gray Whalers, Whitetip Reef Sharks and, occasionally Silvertips, cruise the point. In nearby Rendova Harbor, **Rainbow Passage** is an absolutely fantastic macro dive. We found several leaffish, two mantis shrimp, rare Shrimp Gobies, Signal Gobies and an endless array of colorful invertebrates, all in one dive. There's also the largest patch of Cabbage Coral either one of us had ever seen.

Close to Rainbow Passage rests an

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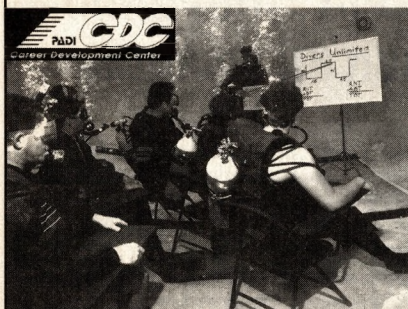
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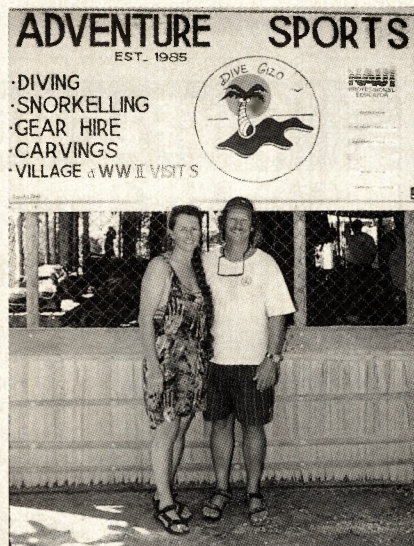
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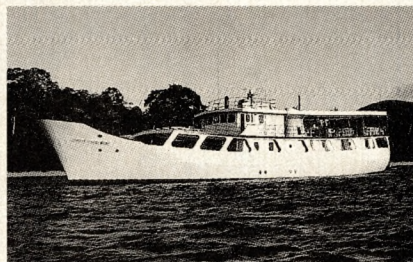
THE SOLOMONS

attacked by dive bombers and set on fire while passing through Blackett Strait, which was part of the Tokyo Express route during the bloody battles of WW II. Ferociously burning, she sank in a small, protected cove, where she rolled on her starboard side and settled conveniently at a perfect depth for recreational diving.

Danny Kennedy and his wife Kerrie,



Above: Kerrie and Danny Kennedy of Adventure Sports in Gizo. Below: Bilikiki Cruises' 125 foot live-aboard, Spirit of Solomons.



who own and operate Adventure Sports, recently discovered the **Hotspot**. When the current is running at this site, practically anything may cruise by. At 75 feet and below, a rare species of a stunning orange soft coral adorns the protruding reefs. In the shallows, a fluorescent anemone amazes marine naturalists and biologists since apparently it's the only one of its kind. It's truly a world-class dive.

Grand Central Station and the **Supermarket** are great action dives,

both featuring sharks, Barracuda, Napoleon Wrasse, huge Humphead Parrotfish, kingfish, tuna, schools of Batfish, huge seafans with an abundant population of gorgeous Longnose Hawkfish and so much more. When the current is running, it's best to just hang on and watch while the colorful parade passes by!

The sheltered reefs of **Nusa Aghana** are a macro photographer's heaven, with many juveniles and unusual critters. The gently sloping reef is also popular because of the resident population of Pygmy Mantas and abundant growth of Orange Elephant Ear Sponges, some reaching enormous dimensions.

In order to see the Solomons' untouched reefs and still enjoy the luxury of an air-conditioned cabin and the convenience of skiff diving, sign on for a live-aboard adventure. Honiara based Bilikiki Cruises runs charters visiting some of the wrecks in Guadalcanal, along with the Florida Islands, Russell Islands and Marovo Lagoon. The itinerary varies with the length of the charter, which ranges from one to three weeks.

Besides the awesome diving, you'll discover interaction with the villagers is one of the highlights of your adventure. Nothing could be more enjoyable than

GETTING THERE

From the U.S., the first stop enroute to the Solomon Islands is usually Fiji. At present, there are several major airlines offering service for this leg of the journey. The flight from



Nadi, Fiji to Honiara is best handled by the country's local carrier—Solomon Airlines. Flights are also available to many of the remote outer islands. Total in-flight time is approximately 17 hours.

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surfacing from another wonderful dive in 80 to 86°F water to find a dugout canoe filled with shyly smiling children watching you curiously.

For more information about the Solomon Islands or any South Pacific location, contact Island Dreams Travel at (800) 346-6116 or (713) 973-9300. You can fax (713) 973-8585; e-mail info@islandream.com or visit on the Internet at www.islandream.com.

OCEAN DIVERS

(Continued from Page 75)

The Underwater Naturalist specialty is also popular at Ocean Divers, probably owing to the Keys' tremendous population of tropical marine life. These waters have been protected from coral collection and spearfishing since 1960 and, as a result, enjoy healthy populations of schooling fish such as grunts, snappers and goatfish, as well as colorful reef tropicals such as angelfish, butterflyfish and moray eels. Key Largo is a great place to observe the bizarre and unusual as well. Here, I have photographed the rare Blanket Octopus (*Tremoctopus violaceus*) and Mola mola. Divers are constantly bringing home stories of Whale Shark sightings and, for decades, the rare and fleeting appearances of Great Hammerhead Sharks on the world's most popular dive site, **Molasses Reef**. This year a Great White Shark was caught in 300 feet of water off **Pickles Reef**. Granted the shark was just utilizing the offshore Gulf Stream current to migrate to cooler waters (it would never be seen by sport divers along the reef), but it does further illustrate the diversity of life populating the waters offshore Key Largo.

One of the most popular courses of all is the Underwater Photo specialty. Operated in collaboration with Stephen Frink Photographic, this combines classroom work in camera maintenance and operation, TTL exposure theory and offers an in-depth insight into how to improve fish, macro and wide angle underwater photographs. The E-6 compatible slide film is quickly processed by Frink Photo's in-house lab so a student can see what is right and wrong with each photo while it is fresh in this/her mind. Most of the classes are taught by resident photo pro Mike Waters but once a year I offer my popular Nikon School of Underwater Photography in Key Largo with Ocean Divers. The next scheduled session is June/July 1998. These classes offer the PADI Underwater Photo specialty, as well as a diploma from the prestigious Nikon School.

For those seeking career preparation for the recreation dive industry, Ocean Divers offers its PADI Career Development Center. With only 11 such centers worldwide, this designation reflects Ocean Divers' ability to train dive instructor candidates at the highest levels. Ocean Divers offers an IDC (Instructor Development Course) to prepare instructors to pass the PADI IE (Instructor Evaluation). In addition, because Ocean Divers is a busy dive resort with complete infrastructure, it can offer a wonderful RITC (Resort Instructor Training Course) to prepare candidates for the real world of resort dive operations. Since Ocean Divers is so well connected in this area, its

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DIVE/LODGING PACKAGES: Ocean Divers has enjoyed a long and close collaboration with Key Largo's most popular dive resort, Marina Del Mar. Marina Del Mar is adjacent to Ocean Divers on the same deep water canal. Its proximity allows divers to stroll from their room to the dive boat dock. If guests choose to utilize Ocean Diver's guest gear storage room, the dive preparations are nearly effortless.

Marina Del Mar offers 76 rooms and suites, as well as a 42 slip marina. Other amenities include a large waterfront restaurant and lounge, conference facilities, lighted tennis courts, a Nautilus fitness room and a huge heated freshwater swimming pool. A sister property, Marina Del Mar Bayside is nearby. Featuring 54 double rooms and two villas, Marina Del Mar Bayside also features dive/lodging packages with Ocean Divers. Whichever resort is chosen, there are attractive price incentives.

For more information about any of the Ocean Divers recreational or educational programs or dive/lodging packages for Key Largo, please call Ocean Divers at (800) 451-1113 or (305) 451-1113. The fax is (305) 451-5765 and the e-mail address is oceandivers@aol.com. For general information, check out Ocean Divers' Web site at **www.oceandivers.com**.

SEA & SEA'S MX-10 WITH CLOSE-UP LENS

(Continued from Page 78)

in mind that the lens' excellent depth of field will help you with the focus. At f/11 about one foot is in focus and at f/22 the depth of field is approximately three feet.

Because color negative film has such a wide exposure latitude, ISO 100 and ISO 400 print film are recommended for use with the MX-10 and the Close-up Lens.

SEA & SEA MX-10 CLOSE-UP SYSTEM COMPONENTS

MX-10 camera	\$413.00
Close-up Lens	\$ 61.95
Lens Caddy	\$ 39.95
YS-40A strobe	\$264.00

With ISO 100 film and the YS-40A flash set to manual, the best exposure is at f/8. ISO 400 film works best at f/16 on manual and f/8 on auto. We found ISO 400 print film gave us the best results.

There may be times when you want to take other MX-10 lenses with you on a dive. This is easy with Sea & Sea's Lens Caddy. It attaches to the top of the YS-

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
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40A strobe and holds the 20mm, Macro or Close-up Lenses. To change lenses underwater, simply twist off one lens and replace it with another.

Although intended only for U/W use, the Close-up Lens works well on land, too. However, the focus point and exposure values will be different. In air, the lens will focus at seven inches. The YS-40A flash is approximately that long and can serve as a distance guide. Simply turn the flash sideways and use it as a measuring device (you can also use a ruler). Use ISO 100 film at either f/11 with the internal flash or f/16 with the YS-40A.

The MX-10 system effectively accomplishes a difficult task. You have the freedom of diving with minimal camera gear yet can capture on film whatever you see throughout your dive. If you're ready to jump into underwater photography, go see your local Sea & Sea dealer. For the address of the one nearest you, contact Sea & Sea Underwater Photography, USA, 2105 Camino Vida Roble, Suite L, Carlsbad, CA 92009; (760) 929-1909. 

TEN WEEKS TO TAKE-OFF

(Continued from Page 14)

equipment, guide dives, assist customers with rental gear, act as boatmasters and all of the other tasks employers will require.

SDM: What courses are available?

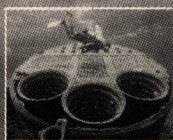
BRAYMAN: We have two program tracks at Hall's. First let me explain the Professional Career Programs, which are for full time students. The core of the Professional Career Program is the ten week Professional Store and Resort Instructor Training Program. An able-bodied person can enroll in this program with no diving experience and will finish with instructor certificates from NAUI, CMAS, ACUC, NASDS, TDI, IANTD, DAN and the National Safety Council. Just as importantly, though, they will also be certified as divemasters by PADI, NAUI and ACUC and as equipment repair technicians by NAUI and ACUC. They will also receive Resort and Store certifications from NAUI and ACUC.

Instructor Training, Sales and Operations, and Equipment Repair Technician are available as individual courses for students who elect not to take the ten week comprehensive course. Owing to the increasing popularity of rebreathers and other new technologies, we also offer two additional courses, the Professional Rebreather Instructor Training Program and the Professional Deep Tech Instructor Program. The Deep Tech program is an

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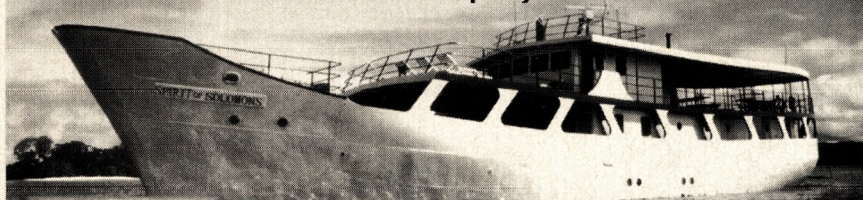
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TEN WEEKS TO TAKE-OFF

introductory program that will give candidates the ability to manage technical situations, whether on a dive boat or in a store.

Our second track is the Honor Program, which is for students with prior experience who are willing to complete substantial home study before arriving. The Honor Program offers the opportunity to build on the experience you already have in order to become a Rescue Diver, Divemaster or Instructor. Like the Professional Program, instructor graduates receive certifications from eight different agencies. The Honor Program courses vary in length from 4 days to 19, depending on the level of instruction and prior experience.

SDM: The training obviously goes well beyond what is needed to instruct diving.

BRAYMAN: Absolutely! One of the difficulties with beginning a career in diving today is that dive instructors have been typecast as people who are just doing the job for fun. Instructor candidates sometimes have a hard time convincing their parents or friends that diving offers legitimate career opportunities. The reality is that there are good jobs in diving, jobs that pay well and have high potential for advancement. But you need to be qualified for more than just teaching students to dive—you need to be trained in the business of diving. That's why we developed such comprehensive programs. Our professional programs make the door of Hall's the entry point to the whole diverse industry of diving, not just to open water instructing.

SDM: What prospects do Hall's graduates have for serious employment?

BRAYMAN: Right now we couldn't possibly supply graduates for all the jobs we have waiting. Our placement record is 100 percent. And there are good reasons why that situation exists. Most importantly, our courses are primarily geared around what employers want, not just what is needed to pass a test, so our graduates are in high demand. They are so multi-talented and certified by so many agencies that they can't be pigeon-holed as one particular type of instructor and that makes them more effective as employees. Because of this any employer in the industry can come to



Bob Brayman

Hall's for new employees and they do. Hall's presently has more than 3,300 active employers in its job placement program. We continually screen this listing to ensure it is up-to-date and the job offerings in it are worthwhile.

Right now Hall's graduates can pick and choose to get what is most important to them, whether it's location, pay or type of work. Our "lead book" has current employment listings for cruise lines, resorts, marine institutes, dive shops, theme parks and live-aboards. There are Hall's graduates working in police departments, universities and even NASA.

SDM: The training needed to launch a vocation in diving is small compared to four years of college tuition but it's still a substantial investment. What sort of assistance do you offer students in managing the cost of the training?

BRAYMAN: Financing definitely is one of the most important parts of making the decision to enter this field. At Hall's we have tried to find as many ways as we can to assist students with financing. Low interest loans are available for up to 100 percent of the fees. Our programs qualify for Veteran's Administration Educational Benefits. Retraining and rehabilitation grants from Workmen's Compensation and the Job Training Assistance Program can also be used at Hall's. Fees for the course, including accommodations, can even be charged to major credit cards.

SDM: Since you broached the subject of accommodations, tell us about living conditions for students and the facilities in general.

photo/Shirley Vanderbilt



Hall's 40 foot dive boat provides quick transportation to nearby dive sites in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

BRAYMAN: Of course, it's tough to beat the Florida Keys and Hall's is right in the middle, on Marathon. Our dive center, classrooms, living quarters, pool and dive boat are all on the premises of the Faro Blanco Marine Resort. The International Career Institute shares a 2,200 square foot building with Hall's Diving Center, built expressly for Hall's by the resort in 1986. Our pool training is conducted in the resort's Olympic sized pool. A wide variety of accommodations are available at Faro Blanco, from luxurious to economical. The resort offers special "share-a-room" rates to Hall's students, which are as low as \$13 per night. The rooms

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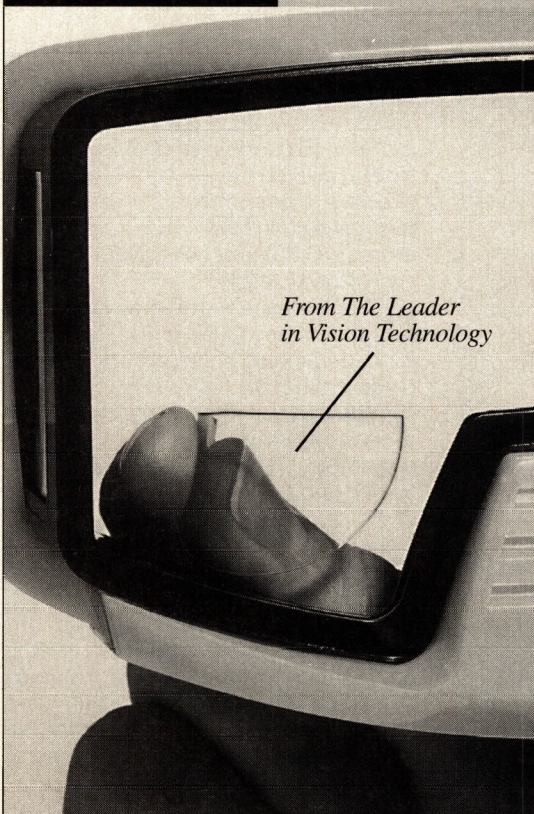


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are dormitory style, with up to four students per room, most with kitchenettes. There are two restaurants at Faro Blanco and a large selection of restaurants, shops and service facilities are close by.

Of course, diving is excellent all year long in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Within a short distance of our docks we can choose from many different deep or shallow dive sites, including some excellent wrecks. Our dive boat is a custom designed 40 foot boat with all the modern safety equipment and diver amenities.

SDM: Brayman, how can people find out more about the International Diving Career Institute at Hall's?

BRAYMAN: Nationally, they can call (800) 331-4255. In Florida or outside the U.S. call (305) 743-5929. Requests can also be faxed to (305) 743-8168 or sent to Bob Brayman's International Diving Career Institute at Hall's, 1994 Overseas Highway, Marathon, Florida 33050.

DIVE COCO ISLAND

(Continued from Page 94)

easy with his great sense of humor.

5 THE BOATS ARE STATE OF THE ART, WITH MANY AMENITIES. Both the *Sea Hunter* and the *Undersea Hunter* are both impressive live-aboards, used by cinematographers and film crews from around the world. The *Sea Hunter* is 115 feet long, with a beam of 26 feet. Very spacious, she is a favorite among divers because of her deck space. She accommodates 18 guests in six doubles and two triples, all with private bathrooms and showers. Common to both vessels are large camera and video work and storage areas, E-6 film processing and fully air-conditioned interiors.

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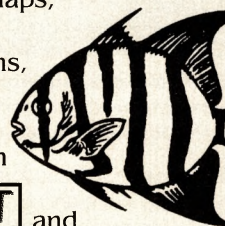
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Top: The Sea Hunter. Above: The Undersea Hunter. Both boats provide luxury amenities and state of the art technology, such as nitrox and rebreathers.

10 YOU CAN CONTACT THE HUNTER FLEET—AND BOOK—DIRECT. The Hunter Fleet reservations office is in beautiful Costa Rica but you can ask any questions or book a trip simply by calling (800) 203-2120, 011 (506) 228-6535 or 011 (506) 228-6613. You can fax your inquiries to 011 (506) 289-7334, send e-mail to info@underseahunter.com or visit the company's Web site at www.underseahunter.com. Mail should be addressed to P.O. Box 025216, Dept. 314, Miami, FL 33102-5216.

Dive Notes

PLATINUM PRO FOUNDATION RECEIVES \$10,000 DONATION: The Platinum Pro Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by Scuba Schools International (SSI) and is dedicated to the education of children. The foundation recently accepted a gift of \$10,000 from Rick Lawson of Salt Lake City. He is one of the several directors of the Platinum Pro Foundation Board. Other foundation directors include Jean-Michel Cousteau, Sylvia Earle, Frank Fennell, Bill Gleason and Bob Clark.

The Platinum Pro Foundation evolved after SSI originated the Platinum Pro 5000 Diver Award in 1993 and the Platinum Pro 5000 Instructor Award in 1995. Together, these recognition awards were intended to recognize both exceptional divers and exceptional teachers of diving.

The Platinum Pro Foundation is com-

pletely independent of SSI. Its primary purpose is to give back to the diving community by developing educational materials about the ocean and to enlighten and educate children about topics ranging from ocean environments and marine life to scuba diving.

For more information on the Platinum Pro Foundation, or to make a donation, contact SSI at (970) 482-0883 or e-mail to admin@ssiusa.com.

TLC LIFETIME WARRANTY: Nikon Inc., has announced a lifetime warranty on all Technical Lighting Control (TLC) acces-

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For more information, contact Nikon Inc., U/W Systems, 1300 Walt Whitman Road, Melville, NY 11747-3064; (800) NIKON-US or visit Nikon Inc.'s Web site at <http://www.nikonusa.com>.

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Turks

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Clare Jardine admires a stand of healthy sponges and corals near French Cay.

The Turks and Caicos Islands are an archipelago of eight islands and 40 small cays on two plateaus, separated by a deep trench called the Columbus Passage. The Caicos occupy the larger plateau, forming a loose horseshoe around the perimeter, with a shallow bank in the middle. The Turks—two major islands—take their name from the Turks head cactus and sit atop the smaller plateau. The T & C are a British Crown Colony, with a governor appointed by the Queen of England and a self-government run by elected ministers and a legislative council. The total population of the Turks and Caicos is around 15,000 and more than half of that number live on Providenciales.

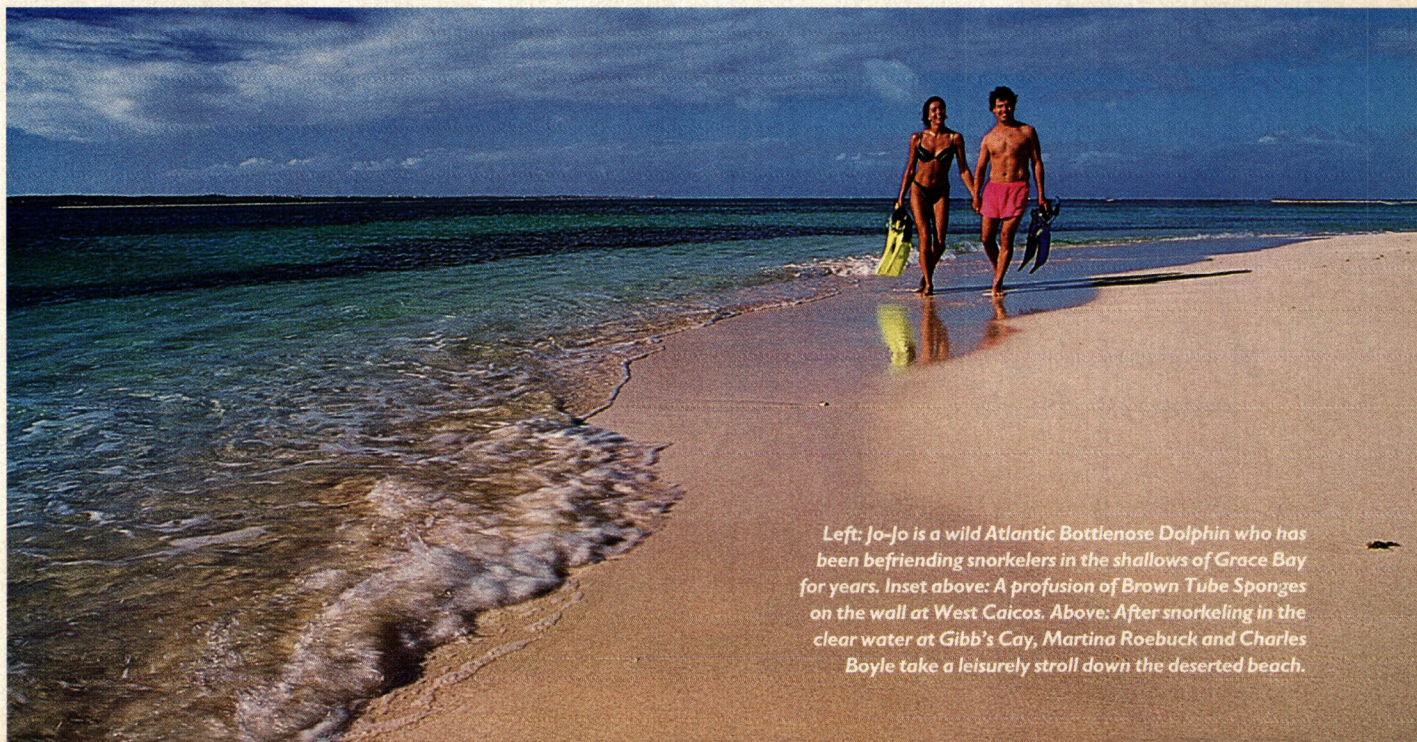
THE DIVING: The spectacular and easily accessible walls in the Turks and Caicos get the most attention but there is much more diversity to diving here than just the walls. Of course, the walls are truly amazing. What can compare to gliding over the edge of a coral cliff in water so clear it almost doesn't seem to exist?

The Turks and Caicos also have a variety of shallow reefs that provide excellent diving and snorkeling, all packed with marine life. And, chances are good for a variety of interesting animal encounters, especially with turtles, sharks and rays. Mantas are often seen along the tops of the walls during the spring, summer and fall. The chance of a topside sighting of marine mammals is also excellent. Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins are in these waters all the time and Humpback Whales migrate through the islands every winter.



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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN



Left: Jo-Jo is a wild Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin who has been befriending snorkelers in the shallows of Grace Bay for years. Inset above: A profusion of Brown Tube Sponges on the wall at West Caicos. Above: After snorkeling in the clear water at Gibb's Cay, Martina Roebuck and Charles Boyle take a leisurely stroll down the deserted beach.

Sea Dancer



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TURKS & CAICOS

Diving conditions are excellent year-round. Visibility on the big walls usually exceeds 100 feet and can often be in the 150 foot range. Water temperatures in the spring, summer and fall are normally 80 to 82°F, dropping only a few degrees to the high 70s during the winter. Strong currents are not generally present but a mild current along the wall is not unusual.

PROVIDENCIALES: On Provo, as the island is usually called, there are two main diving areas. **Grace Bay** is the crescent formed by the north coast of the island and is the area closest to most of the dive operators and hotels. The bay is outlined by nearly 12 miles of glorious beach on one side and a long, shallow coral reef on the other. Seaward of the reef crest a series of coral covered ridges slopes gently down from near the surface to about 30 feet before dropping steeply to 90 or 100 feet. This combination of shallow reef and "mini-wall" is typical of Grace Bay dive sites such as the **Pinnacles**. Schools of Blue Chromis and Creole Wrasse swarm along the lip of the drop-off and Queen Angelfish, Schoolmasters and Trumpetfish swim among the corals. Green Morays and Nassau Groupers are seen on most dives. Grace Bay is also the home of Jo-Jo the Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin, who has been entertaining snorkelers here for years.

Northwest Point also offers excellent diving. The wall is carved with interesting formations, from the deeply undercut lens at **Amphitheater** to the cascading tiers of Plate Coral at **Coral Stairway**. One hundred feet down at **Shark Hotel**, a chimney cuts diagonally through the reef, exiting at about 130 feet on the face of the wall. At **Eel Garden**, named for its Brown Garden Eels, the side of the wall is covered with sheets of Plate Coral. Several species of Black Coral grow in

profusion along the Northwest Point wall.

PINE CAY: Pine Cay is one of a series of small islands that extend from Northwest Point on Provo to the tip of North Caicos.

New Jack City, named for the schools of jacks frequently seen here, is one of several dive sites along this strip. The bottom is a series of long valleys with varying slopes. The coral cover is a mix of soft and hard corals. Giant Barrel Sponges and Leathery Barrel Sponges are found in the deeper sections.

WEST CAICOS: This large, uninhabited island is about ten miles southwest of Provo. The Lake Catherine bird reserve here is home to almost 100 species, including great blue herons, ospreys and pink flamingoes.

The wall at West Caicos is truly world-class. **Elephant Ear Canyon** is named for the enormous Orange Elephant Ear Sponge between two coral ridges about 90 feet down the wall. **Driveway** takes its name from two well defined sand channels that run from shallow water to the top of the wall. This is an exceptional dive above and below the lip of the wall. The top of the wall offers big boulders of Star and Brain Coral. As the wall begins to curve downward, the Star Corals change from boulders to knobs. On the vertical wall face, they change shape again, taking on a more advantageous plate form. Even below 100 feet, the reef seems to have a lot of color, owing to the green, purple and pink of tube sponges and Black Corals.

The **Gullies** are named for the bottom formations but the best features are the groupers. Three or four Nassau Groupers seem to enjoy encounters with divers. Below 60 or 70 feet Black Corals and rope sponges become more numerous on the wall. **Highway to Heaven** is one of those West Caicos dive sites where you have to watch your depth carefully because the visibility is incredible and the coral extends far below 130 feet.

FRENCH CAY: The weather has to co-

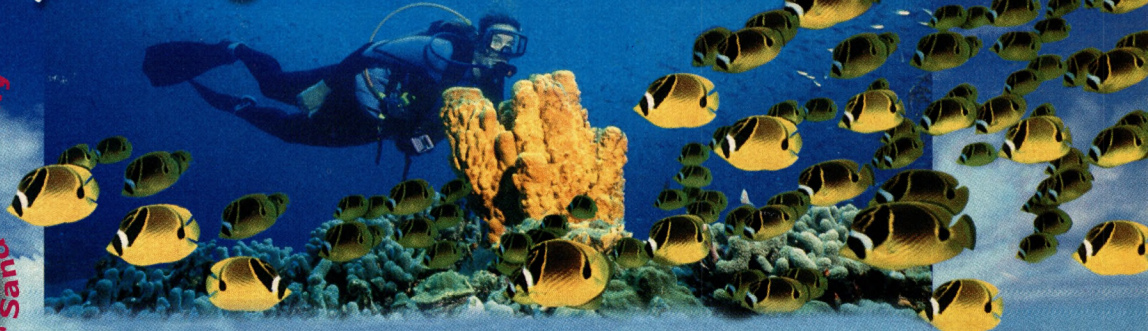


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TURKS AND CAICOS

operate for a trip to French Cay but it's worth the wait. The wall is more of a slope here and the coral is in excellent condition. Beyond French Cay is **West Sand Spit**, a long slope crowded with coral and surrounded by a profusion of reef fish at every level. **Molasses Reef** has a well developed spur and groove system that ends abruptly at 45 feet at the edge of the vertical wall.

NORTH, MIDDLE, EAST AND SOUTH CAICOS: Although these islands account for a major part of the Turks and Caicos land mass, they are sparsely settled. Most diving here is done from Provo or Grand Turk, with some visitation by live-aboards. The South Caicos wall is deeper, generally starting at 60 to 70 feet, and the currents can be stronger. The payoff is potential encounters with large marine life such as Mantas and sharks.

GRAND TURK: Standing on the beach at Grand Turk you can see where the water turns dark blue over the wall just a short distance out. Between the beach and the wall there is an extensive shallow reef, with dive sites such as the **Library** and **Coral Garden** that are thick with fish, day or night. Big colonies of reef building corals, such as Star and Giant Star Coral, are piled high along the lip of the wall, which varies from 40 to 50 feet deep.

The wall faces the serious deepness of Columbus Passage, dropping straight down into the blue. **Black Forest** is known for its Black Corals. The Grand Turk wall is also known for its swim-throughs and cuts, particularly at **McDonald's Arch**. A series of deeply cut ravines gives the wall an interesting profile at the **Tunnels** and seems to attract more fish than usual. The white sand beach and shallow reef at **Gibb's Cay** make it a great snorkeling spot easily reached from Grand Turk.

SALT CAY: The salt raking industry started on Salt Cay in the 1670s finally came to an abrupt halt in the 1960s but the buildings and ponds still remain untouched. Salt Cay may be a small island, with less than 300 inhabitants, but the underwater landscape is immense. Like the rest of the Turks and Caicos, there is great diving in the 40 to 130 foot range, however, there is even more excellent shallow diving at Salt Cay.

The **HMS Endymion** is an 18th century warship that lies in only 25 feet of water. The wreck site is undisturbed and includes 18 encrusted cannons and four huge anchors. **Great Sand Cay** is a favorite place for Nurse Sharks, especially during the summer months when they gather in the shallows to mate. **Kelly's**

Folly, Turtle Garden and **Wandalust** are very different dives but all feature a 35 or 40 foot deep reef that drops off into a wall. **Black Coral Canyon** is a deep dive along a gorge covered with lush Black Corals. A ledge at 130 feet cuts back into the wall, providing a sheltered spot that is frequently used by resting Nurse Sharks.

A series of sand gullies flows down the reef to the top of the wall at **Shark Point**, where sharks are frequently sighted, along with hundreds of other fish. A sandy chute through the reef nearby is called **Conch Highway** because so many conch pass through in the winter on their way to deeper water. **Point Pleasant** is one of Salt Cay's premier shallow dive and snorkel sites. Only 15 feet deep, it features some exceptionally large corals.

TURKS AND CAICOS TOPSIDE: Relaxing on a tranquil beach is one of the favorite topside activities in the Turks and Caicos. If you are looking for nightlife, Provo is the place where you can find casinos and late night entertainment. Other daytime activities on Provo include windsurfing, kayaking and fishing. The Caicos Conch Farm and the rock carvings are also worth a visit. Walking tours of the dramatic limestone caves on Middle Caicos are available for the adventurous and Loyalist plantations from the late 1700s can be toured on North Caicos. On Salt Cay, the salt ponds, windmills, tools and buildings have been preserved for visitors.

A wide variety of restaurants can be found in the Turks and Caicos, especially on Provo.

TRAVEL INFORMATION: American Airlines operates two daily nonstop flights to Provo from Miami, with convenient connections to Grand Turk and the other islands on several inter-island commuter airlines. U.S. citizens can travel with either a passport or a certified birth certificate and photo ID. The U.S. dollar is the official currency and the electrical standard is 110 volts/60 cycles. Dress is very casual but bathing suits and bare midriffs should be limited to beaches and boats. A light jacket will come in handy at night in the winter. A multi-lock hyperbaric chamber is available at Menzies Medical Center on Provo.

Accommodations are available on Salt Cay, Middle Caicos and South Caicos but most of the hotels are on either Provo or Grand Turk. Dive operators can be found on Provo, Grand Turk and Salt Cay. Two live-aboard dive boats operate year-round in the Turks and Caicos. Both are based in Provo and cover the whole island chain. The live-aboards offer great diving without long or difficult passages between sites.

For more information about diving in the Turks and Caicos, you can contact the Turks and Caicos Tourist Board at (809) 946-2321.

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DIVERS UNLIMITED

(Continued from Page 77)

ID book by identifying and observing at least 15 different species of fish, corals and invertebrates each time they make a dive. This practical experience helps the instructors truly comprehend the subject and, consequently, the instructor is better able to promote the program.

Diving, with all its integral parts, is a business. Teaching scuba is a business. To be successful you need to make what you do sizzle. DU's director of instructor development, Raul Lored, strongly believes in using practical learning experiences as the core of DU's teaching method. "You have to know intimately what it is you are teaching, to the point of it being natural enough to be fun," he says. A seasoned veteran with 25 years of diving and teaching experience, Raul holds more than 25 instructor level specialties.

According to DU, the best way to learn is to have candidates do the actual work under the constant guidance of a course director who corrects mistakes along the way. Candidates practice teaching instead of simply listening in on a class in progress. They observe a class segment, then teach two complete programs with all their specialties and components. This includes using all educational support materials, giving lectures and conducting dives, where they give the pre and post dive briefings, demonstrate and execute dive skills, as well as log the dives. Part of the training requires candidates to be responsible for the maintenance of their students' records. This way, they learn first hand how to set up records to meet the required standards set by PADI and others.

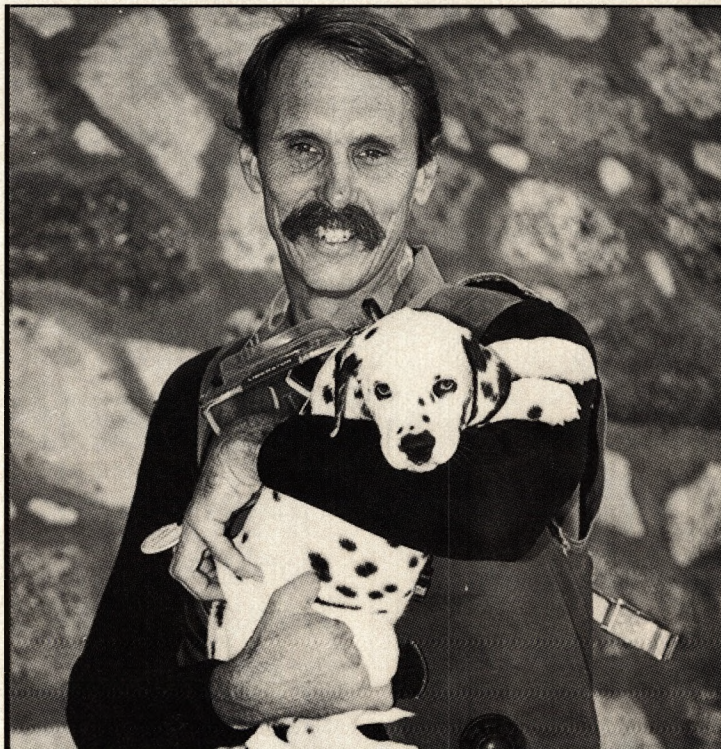
Course directors such as Raul spend a lot of time with candidates in the ROS program, putting them in hands-on training situations as much as possible. This is where DU's Gold Program offers a different perspective to instructors, providing the knowledge and understanding they need to assess, modify and adapt to whatever environment they end up in.

Divers Unlimited is currently working toward becoming completely multi-media. Those working or planning to work in an ultra-modern facility will learn how to make multi-media presentations on a computer in conjunction with or in place of current, traditional teaching media such as books, slides, etc.

DU's ROS course goes beyond training instructors to teach more specialties. The real value of this program is candidates gain the skills necessary to be successful in any type of dive resort or shop environment. The core of the course includes handling customer sales and service, course marketing and management, dive boat operations and anything

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DIVERS UNLIMITED

else that might take place in day to day operations. Divers Unlimited's creation of the Resort Operations Specialist defines what should be expected of the industry.

In real life, it is not uncommon for an operation owner or general manager to ask an employee to drop what he or she is doing and work as divemaster and/or lead a group of students on a check-out dive. During the ROS, Divers Unlimited places its candidates in those types of real life situations.

The last two weeks of the ROS program become both shop and dive boat intensive. Naturally, this begins right in DU's 8,000 square foot complex, an impressive retail, rental and repair center, with local dive charters (provided by its two boats), year-round scuba instruction and an air station, which also features nitrox. DU's retail division alone offers more space than most totally dedicated dive shops.

As part of the ROS Boat Handling Module, candidates take part in hands-on boat training during actual boat outings. The purpose is not to make a captain of the ROS candidate but to teach the mechanics involved in the daily operation of a dive boat, including prepping and loading the boat before departure; understanding and performing navigation tasks with both compass and GPS; learning line of sight methods for locating both reefs and wrecks; anchoring and mooring techniques; as well as docking and boat securing procedures at the end of the day. The student learns the role of a boat divemaster, effectively understanding the nuances of what the captain does. Even the basic skills of reading sea conditions, working with currents, etc., are not overlooked, because they are typically incorporated into a pre-dive briefing. Students also work on customer relation skills (with actual customers), dealing with various levels of certification, diving experiences and personalities.

Right after the ROS course many students jump straight into nitrox, currently a focus of many resorts and dive centers worldwide. DU's in-depth training includes oxygen cleaning, oxygen fills and the precautions and hazards of enriched air diving. Besides having the unique opportunity to work with one of the largest airfill stations around, (it's capable of holding more than 100,000 square feet of air in reserve), students will also learn the differences and complexities of a big compressor and/or a traditional resort type system.

As Dave Inman attests: "When ROS graduates leave here, they leave with all the skills to work in this facility, which is

one of the toughest facilities to walk into on account of its complexity—in retail, teaching, service and repairs, and dive charters.”

It is Raul's policy that if any resort or store sponsored candidate for the ROS is not living up to expectations, Divers Unlimited will bring him or her up to speed. Having run his own operation in the Caribbean, Raul can identify with owners who have to retrain instructors. Operators want a staff they can work with easily, so the only thing they need do is orient them to the subtle differences in their facility. Instructors finishing their training at Diver's Unlimited walk away with the knowledge an owner is after, the skills the manager needs and, above all, what they want in their career.

Divers Unlimited's Gold Program for the ROS can commence right after the fulfillment of the PADI IEC or anytime thereafter. Taking approximately three full weeks to complete, it is open to all current PADI open water instructors.

As with any other form of advanced education, most students can't pay the entire tuition up front. For instructor candidates, particularly those pursuing the Gold Program, Divers Unlimited can arrange a student loan that covers 75 to 80 percent of the tuition, to be paid back after graduation.

To reach a Divers Unlimited career counselor or to obtain an information packet, call (800) 289-3483 in the U.S. or Canada. In Florida, call (954) 981-0156 or fax (954) 963-5255. Mail your inquiries to Divers Unlimited, 6023 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, FL 33024. 🐠

Dive Notes

BUBBLES GALORE: Bubbles Galore invites you to visit its new location at the



Sandy Beach Island Resort in Barbados. Director Robbie Prathapchandra says the new facility provides the convenience

of co-location with an outstanding resort and also opens up many interesting new dive areas on the south coast. To give divers a chance to join in the thrill of discovering these new reefs, Bubbles Galore is offering special Adventure Dive trips. A new and previously undived area is explored on each of these trips.

Another unique dive available from Bubbles Galore is the Atlantis Submarine Rendezvous. On this one-of-a-kind dive your non-diving family or friends watch you underwater while they're aboard the Atlantis sub.

Bubbles Galore also offers daily dive

trips to the reefs and wrecks in the protected waters of Barbados. The long ridge of coral reef extending along the western coast offers great diving between 40 and 80 feet. The reefs are packed with life, including many Hawksbill Turtles. Barbados also abounds with exciting wrecks, from the French tugboat *Berwyn* in 25 feet of water to the 365 foot long freighter *Stavronikita*, in 130 feet. The *Stavro* is an exciting wreck and many dives are required to see it all.

For more information call Bubbles Galore tollfree at (800) 513-5821, (246) 430-0354, fax (246) 436-8806. 🐠

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DIVE TAVEUNI

(Continued from Page 105)

to explore throughout the **Rainbow Reef** area. **Blue Ribbon Eel Reef** offers a healthy reef teeming with life, especially the elusive Blue Ribbon Eel. The dive-masters know just where to find them for anxious photographers.

Besides the beautiful soft corals, there are prolific stands of hard corals. **Cabbage Patch** is a site where fish of every color make their homes in the Cabbage Coral.

The Ledge is home to lionfish that seek asylum beneath the bommie overhangs. **Yellow Grotto**, aptly named for its dense yellow soft coral, features prolific critters, large and small, who seek protection in the grotto. You may occasionally see pelagic creatures off in the blue, but mainly Rainbow Reef is about coral bommies, colorful fish and animals that contribute to this colorful ecosystem.

When your day's dives are memories, what else is there to see and do on this island? The third largest island in Fiji, Taveuni is nicknamed the Garden Isle because of its wet climate. The advantage to lots of water is beautiful foliage; you can find flowers of every color of the rainbow throughout the island.



Above: The bures at Dive Taveuni are spacious, airy and brightly lit. Below: The Lelewai II transports divers to Fiji's magical reefs.



Taveuni offers sightseeing and adventure for everyone. Waterfalls flow from the 4,000 foot mountain peaks, providing a perfect afternoon hike. Bouma Falls consists of three falls that range from a gentle 10 minute hike to steeper climbs with spectacular lookout points.

Fijians are some of the friendliest people on earth. They will gladly welcome you into their village and share a *bilo* (half a coconut shell) of kava, the local grog.

Do Cammick can arrange for a visit to one of the local villages so you can share in the memorable experience of discovering new friends.

Come visit Ric and Do at Dive Taveuni. They invite you to experience nature in all its splendor. This is paradise found—both above and below the water!

FIJI BOUND

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi takes approximately 10 hours. The outer islands are reached via either Air Fiji or Sunflower Airlines.



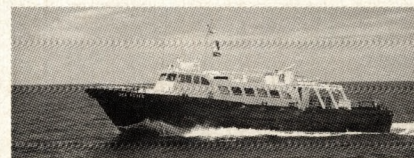
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For further information, contact Dive Taveuni at 011 (679) 880-441 or fax 011 (679) 880-466 or write to them c/o Matei Post Office, Taveuni, Fiji Islands. 🐠

Dive Notes

SEA FEVER TO CAY SAL BANK: Once again Sea Fever Diving Cruises is offering seven day live-aboard trips to the remote Cay Sal Bank of The Bahamas. Lying just north of Cuba, Cay Sal Bank offers spectacular diving in one of the most remote areas of The Bahamas. Unique features of the bank include seven ocean blue holes, ranging in size from 100 feet to one-quarter mile in diameter, with depths ranging from 90 feet to in excess of 300. These formations are not caves but rather sinkholes starting in only 25 feet of water.



Cay Sal also has The Bahamas' best wall diving, with an abundance of marine life and unique photo opportunities.

Sea Fever accommodates 14 guests in double occupancy cabins and features E-6 film processing.

For a unique adventure to the remote Cay Sal Bank or other Bahamas destinations, contact Sea Fever Diving Cruises, P.O. Box 21725, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33335 or call (800) 443-3837, (954) 202-5608 or e-mail seafever@seafever.com. The Web site is at <http://www.seafever.com>. 🐠

Huge Great White Caught Off The Florida Keys

BY JOHN GEIGER
PHOTO BY KEVIN WADLOW

One of the largest Great White Sharks ever pulled from tropical Atlantic waters was caught by a fisherman last January several miles from one of the world's most popular dive spots—**Molasses Reef** off Key Largo. The estimated 2,500 pound Great White was roaming waters four nautical miles from Molasses, part of John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.



Scientists say this catch does not indicate Great Whites infest the area, which is especially popular with divers and snorkelers during the winter months. Rather, this fish was probably a loner at the southern extent of its migratory range. Great Whites are known to be coldwater fish.

The shark drew a crowd of fishermen, divers and tourists when it was pulled up onto the docks in Key Largo. They may have witnessed the end of an era: That shark may have been the fishery's swan song. New federal rules limiting shark

harvesting are expected to be implemented by summer.

The National Marine Fisheries Service rules would prohibit commercial and recreational anglers from taking Great Whites, among five other species, said John Kelly of the NMFS. For recreational anglers, it will be tag and release only.

Conservationists who backed the measure claim the population of some shark species in the Atlantic have declined by 80 percent in recent years.

Meanwhile, scientists will examine parts of the carcass to learn more about this fascinating apex predator. Shark ex-

pert Dr. Jose Castro said the 16 foot long fish would have tipped the scales at 2,500 pounds. The exact weight will never be known because parts of the fish were removed before it could be weighed.

The largest Great White on record with the International Game Fish Association is 2,664 pounds, taken off South Australia in 1959. Castro said he has heard of Atlantic Great Whites weighing up to 7,000 pounds.

"But those reports have to be taken with a grain of salt because they were not verified," he said.

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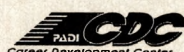


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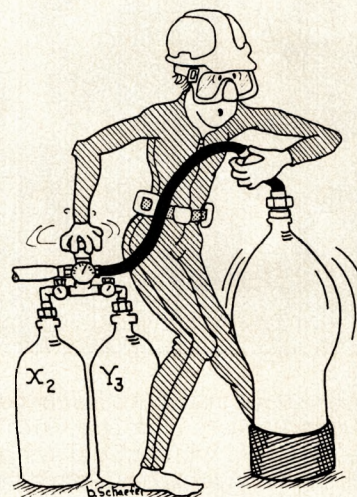
Dive Notes

SSI's New C-CARD: Show how experienced you've become and be recognized for your accomplishments every time you show your certification card. The new SSI C-card documents the year a diver started and how many dives he/she has logged, providing the recognition a diver wants. And, it looks great!

SSI's new C-card is made of durable plastic and looks unique. The front side pictures the diver's rating in full color, with the world in the background. The reverse side resembles a four color credit card with a photograph of the diver in the upper left hand corner. Directly below the diver's photo is the number of logged dives, which prominently displays the owner's experience. Set off at the center of the card is a hot-looking "diving since" emblem, showing at a glance how long you have been diving.

If you want to show how experienced you've become, regardless of what C-card you now hold, call SSI Headquarters at (800) 892-2702 to locate an SSI authorized dealer near you. Send e-mail to admin@ssiusa.com or visit the Web site at <http://www.ssiusa.com>. SSI has been certifying confident divers since 1970 and has a worldwide network of more than 1,300 authorized dealers in 79 countries and territories.

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LOS ROQUES

(Continued from Page 68)

While the *Antares III* has a nice sized dive platform, almost all diving is done from the vessel's two 18 foot *peneros*, locally designed skiffs. The *Antares III* works in a mothership fashion, using smaller boats to deploy divers on sites because the marine park prohibits anchoring near any reef systems. Travel time to and from each dive site is seldom more than ten minutes.

TRIPS TO THE INTERIOR

Close in size to both the States of Texas and Louisiana combined, the Venezuela countryside features semi-dry savannah (grassland-type plains) criss-crossed by large rivers and dense jungle covered mountains with majestic waterfalls that cascade from remarkable elevations. The most visual is Angel Falls, the highest waterfall in the world, plummeting from the top of Auyantepuy, with an elevation of 7,874 feet.

A three to four day side trip to the Southern Guayana region, south of the Orinoco River, is well worth the time. This immense stretch of Venezuela's south-eastern territory is a significant portion of South America's Amazonian makeup. It is home to myriad plants and animals, some of which are found nowhere else on earth. Preserving a large part of this incredible ecosystem is the Canaima National Park. Founded in 1962 by the Venezuelan government, Canaima is one of the largest in the world, covering some three million hectares of wilderness. Inside the park are lodging facilities providing river excursions, such as Camp Ucaima, Kavac and Arekuna.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Airlines servicing Venezuela from Miami to Caracas (just three hours) include American, United, Lan Chile, Servivensa and VASA. A short, 40 minute commuter flight



via one of LTA Airlines' fleet will transfer you to Gran Roque. There, guests are met by LTA representatives at the airport and transported to either the *Antares III* or a *posada* on Gran Roque. In addition to the *Antares III*, LTA operates a fleet of four, 55 foot catamarans for day sail/snorkel trips in Los Roques.

Started some 50 years ago by Dutch adventurer, Jungle Rudy, Ucaima sits amidst the forest above Hacha and Sapo Falls on the Carrao River. This family owned and operated facility is best

known for up-river excursions to the base of Angel Falls. This trek takes a little more than one-half day to complete, with a three to four hour return to camp.

A second region worth looking into is the Orinoco Delta, where the mighty Orinoco River (second largest in South America) forms a massive system of tributaries and wetland jungles full of wildlife. LTA provides its own brand of excursions into both the inner and outer Delta regions. 🐟

Dive Notes

THE 1997 SSI PRODUCT CATALOG:

Printed in four colors with a 16 page format, the new SSI Product Catalog presents SSI's full line of programs and products from the student Open Water Diver level to Instructor Certifier, plus includes SSI's award winning DiveLog system.

SSI's Total Teaching System, which benefits divers by using manuals, study guides, videos and more, is evidenced throughout the catalog.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AT SCUBA-PRO:

Several organizational changes have been made at Scubapro USA. Regina Franklin assumes the position of marketing manager and will be responsible for the company's overall marketing direction. Tom Ingram will continue as SEA manager and will assume additional responsibilities as product manager, with primary responsibility for current product management. Guy Miller assumes the position of national sales manager, with responsibility for the direction of Scubapro's sales force for the U.S. and Canada.

The business unit manager position, formerly held by Robert Stoss, has been eliminated. During his more than ten years with Scubapro, Robert was responsible for significant growth in both the German and U.S. markets.

For more information on Scubapro or the name of the dealer nearest you, contact the company at 1326 Willow Road, Sturtevant, WI 53177; (414) 884-1500; fax (414) 884-1600. 🐟

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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY WALT STEARNS

Looking for something different in a scuba instruction career development center? How about an IDC training facility that provides its candidates with the training needed to become a PADI instructor as well as providing room and board in a home-spun setting? Offering this type of arrangement, in conjunction with its course program, is the Eastern Academy of Scuba Education (EASE).

Haven't yet heard of it? This relatively young IDC/CDC facility was established just four years ago, in early 1992. It is an offshoot of the Deep Six family of Florida East Coast Dive and Watersports Centers (from Melbourne to Stuart, Florida), which have provided dive equipment and services, including instruction, since 1979. In the heart of Vero Beach, Florida, five minutes from its parent Deep Six watersports retail facility, EASE's Instructor Development Center is like no other.

Nestled in the middle of a secluded, three acre tract of oak hummock woodlands, the EASE campus resembles a combination bed and breakfast inn and summer camp. Working from a converted three bedroom, family sized home, the facility features a large, dedicated classroom equipped with all the current audio, video and conventional PADI teaching materials. Complimentary housing, provided for up to 10 IDC candidates, is comprised of a series of bunkbeds in each of the three spacious bedrooms.

In addition to conducting courses, an EASE staff member prepares home cooked meals (no fast food takeout here) each evening. Candidates fix their own breakfasts and lunches from a pantry stocked with favorite food items. With a washer and dryer at their disposal, taking care of laundry is easy. The grounds also feature a 25 by 50 foot pool right off the living room.



Course director Dianne Delashaw reviews Medic First Aid skills with students in the dedicated EASE classroom.

HIGHLY PERSONALIZED

The concept behind the EASE campus originated from the Hammett family's understanding that becoming a scuba instructor can be a big step, both financially and psychologically. Typically, the duration of an IDC (for candidates already holding a divemaster rating) from start to graduation, including the Instructor Evaluation Course, can be up to ten days. The actual instruction/training is just part of your financial obligation. Often overlooked are the logistics for habitation, dining and even transportation, factors that can add substantially to the overall cost.

Besides removing financial stress, the closeness created by the EASE facility sets an atmosphere conducive for great camaraderie. Additionally, the advantage of having most of the course teaching aids and materials, classroom, pool, etc., close at hand, makes it easy for students to practice anything they feel necessary.

In fact, the only reason IDC students need to leave the EASE grounds is to fulfill the ocean and dive boat training requirements in West Palm Beach, a 75 minute drive from Vero Beach. The usual boat for these field trips is *Giant Stride*, operated by Capt. Jay Mauney,



Dianne Delashaw conducts a dive tables course at EASE. Small class sizes and a personalized atmosphere create an excellent learning environment.

who also serves as one of EASE's backup course directors.

In addition to the large pool and West Palm Beach dives, a lake across the street from the EASE campus also provides an effective site for some in-water training. The lake is also convenient for accumulating additional dive hours or skill improvement, practicing anything from basic open water training to navigation or search and recovery techniques and the IEC exam that follows the IDC program.

EASE is not limited to IDC. It also provides everything from advanced or rescue, to medic first aid and divemaster training, with the same arrangements, which can be a big help if the goal is to achieve an instructor rating. For already established PADI instructors, EASE provides additional training/certification for medic first aid and DAN oxygen instructor (which allows students to obtain PA-

DI's oxygen provider specialty instructor rating). Job placement is also a part of the services offered by EASE. Stephanie Tillman helps students with this part of their career planning as well as resumes and curricula vitae.

In the short time since EASE opened its doors, it has been awarded PADI's Five Star rating as a full service Instructor Development Center and been certified and licensed by the State of Florida Board of Independent Post Secondary Vocational, Technical, Trade and Business Schools. This means everything in PADI's training programs, from begin-

ning level scuba instruction to IDC instructor ratings is identified as vocational/technical training for career purposes.

When it comes to finding a center for continuing scuba education, it's nice to find a place such as the EASE facility, where the term "highly personalized" really means something. To reach EASE for more information, call (800) 732-9685; outside the U.S. call (561) 562-8338 or write to Eastern Academy of Scuba Education, 416 Miracle Mile Plaza, Vero Beach, FL 32960. You can also write to the e-mail address at deep6ease@vero.com.

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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

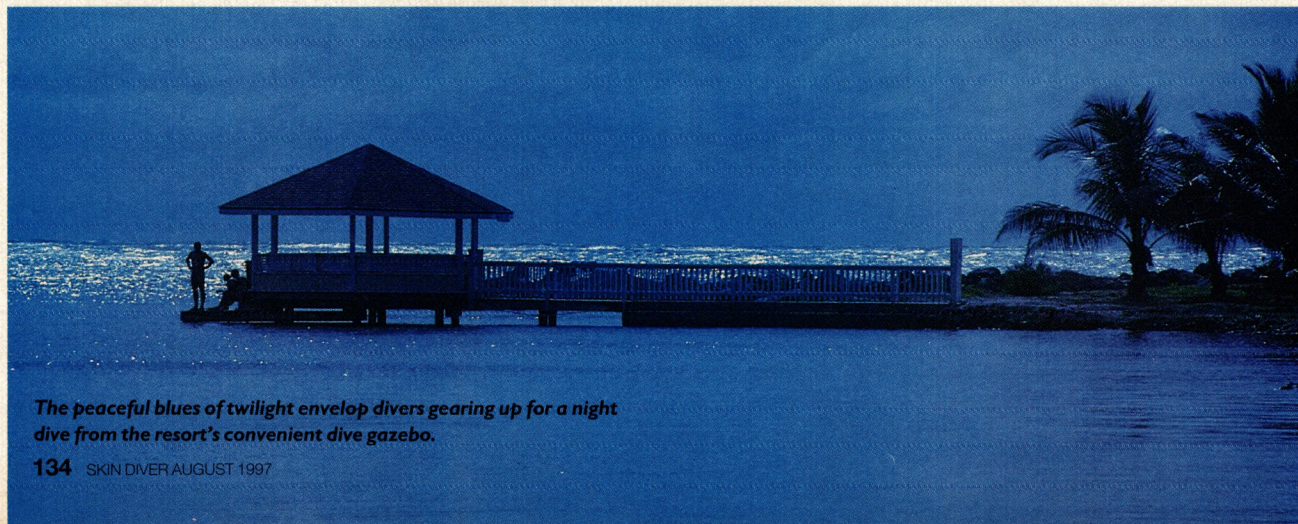
The island of Roatan possesses a unique geography: more than 30 miles long (including three mile long Helene, which is actually an extension of Roatan separated only by a narrow canal) and only one to three miles wide, it gives the impression of being tiny and large at the same time. Drive its length and it will take you more than an hour. But, during that sojourn, you will find several areas along the spine of the island where you can easily see both coasts simultaneously.

That is exactly the aerial view of Fantasy Island, easily Roatan's most comfortable and luxurious dedicated dive resort. There is a reef immediately in front of the resort, an extensive beach that borders the oceanside and then the resort itself, nestled in palms and greenery. Behind the resort rises the main island with its spine of verdant hills; in the background, less than a mile away, is Roatan's north coast. In that single view are the three assets that make Fantasy Island Beach Resort, Dive and Marina, one of the most unique dive retreats in the Caribbean:

(Continued on Page 152)



Top left: A diver cruises past a large Pillar Coral and sea fan in clear waters. Top: An octopus greets a diver during a night shore dive. Above: An aerial view of Fantasy Island Resort, with both Roatan coasts visible.



The peaceful blues of twilight envelop divers gearing up for a night dive from the resort's convenient dive gazebo.

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Aquatica N90

NIKON'S PROFESSIONAL UNDERWATER HOUSING FOR THE HIGH TECH N90 AND N90S CAMERAS

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

When the carton arrived from Nikon containing the new Aquatica N90 housing, I was delighted. Having used Aquatica metal housings for the past 12 years, I was well acquainted with their fine workmanship and rugged durability. Aquatica housings and Nikon cameras have served me well for more than a decade and helped me produce many exceptional underwater photos.

Yet, when I opened the carton and surveyed this gleaming new housing, I was floored! Here was the same rugged durability and fine craftsmanship but 30 percent more compact than the previous model. The subtle hand of Nikon thinking was evident at every turn of a knob, lever or button.

The Aquatica 90 is designed to accommodate Nikon's hottest selling camera line, including the N90s (current ver-

sion), N90 (older version), F90X and F90 (overseas versions). All four versions are the identical configuration and fit perfectly into the same housing.

The two part metal housing is sealed with an O-ring and two spring-loaded latches. The latches have a locking tab to prevent accidental opening. Two stainless steel guide pins ensure proper alignment of the two mating housing surfaces.

The camera mounts on a raised platform in the front half of the housing, allowing easy film reloading without disturbing any internal gears or control settings. Autofocus and shutter speed release are activated electronically through a reed switch that connects directly to the camera's internal electronics.

The housing is delivered with a standard set of eight external controls; six rotating knobs and two levers. With these

controls you can activate all of the camera's major features, including autofocus, shutter release, manual focus, manual aperture control, power on/off switch, mode selector, command input control dial, focus mode selector and so on. All of the external controls are cleverly positioned so they can be manipulated easily while holding the handgrips.

One of the most impressive innovations of the new Aquatica 90 housing is the bayonet mount ports. Much like the Nikonos V and Nikonos RS, the new housing features lens ports that simply slip into the housing and rotate one-quarter turn clockwise to lock. This new system eliminates any possibility of cross threading or accidental leakage from not fully screwing down the port. A gentle push inward seats the O-ring for a positive seal.

Nikon offers four basic ports: a six inch acrylic Wide Angle Dome Port; an eight inch acrylic Wide Angle Dome Port; an acrylic Flat Macro Port; and a glass Flat Macro Port. These basic ports are supplemented by five different extension rings that provide a wide range of lens/port configurations, ranging from a 200mm macro lens to 16mm fisheye.

Eight different sets of lens gears are available for manual control of lens focus and aperture. They are matched with the specific diameter of the gear in use and slip on easily. An O-ring mounted on the internal wall of the gear provides positive grip to eliminate gear slippage.

The Aquatica 90 is fitted with a Nikonos V type TTL flash connector that allows use of any Nikonos strobe: SB 105, SB 104, SB 103 and SB 102. Inside the housing, the flash connector is wired to a hot shoe that mounts on the top of the camera. Externally, the Aquatica 90 housing is fitted with a number of standard threaded screw mounts that allow easy adaptation of flash arms, external light meter, focusing light or other accessories.

The Aquatica 90 is, in reality, three different underwater housings, each specifically designed for the photographer's personal skills and needs. This technological innovation sets the Aquatica 90 apart from all the rest. Nikon has achieved this diversity by producing

three different housing inserts that are virtually interchangeable.

The Standard Housing (#18011) features a plain back, which makes it the most compact of the three. It allows all of the basic control functions of the camera, including a small window for viewing the LCD on the top of the camera. A small pushbutton on the housing back illuminates the LCD for use in caves, wrecks or on night dives. This version has a suggested retail price of \$2,002.

The Mechanical Housing (#18001) features a large rear window and six push-buttons for manually operating Nikon's MF-26 Multi-Control camera back. This accessory provides a wide array of extended functions, including auto bracketing, auto flash bracketing, multiple exposures and so on. This version has a suggested retail price of \$2,073.

The Electronic Housing (#18021) features a computerized back complete with its own LCD data window. The computer offers a wide selection of expanded camera functions controlled electronically. A series of four pushbuttons on the housing back provide on/off switching, mode selection and function selection. The computer has three different modes. The first mode offers a selection of 15 different camera functions, while the other two can be customized to store and repeat any set of combinations you program into the computer. The computer can be used in conjunction with the camera's standard back or MF-26 Multi-Control back. And, to make this computer user friendly, it can be programmed to display in a variety of different languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish or Swedish. The entire computer back is powered by two 1.5 volt AA alkaline batteries. This version has a suggested retail price of \$2,803.

Aquatica 90 housings are available at select dive stores and photo dealers. For the location of the dealer closest to you, call (800) NIKON-US. 🐠

Dive Notes

THE 1997 NIKONOS SHOOTOUTS: One of the three 1997 Nikonos Shootouts has been held, but there's still time to participate in the last two:

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SUNKEN SCARLET IBIS OFFERS NEW ARTIFICIAL REEF IN TOBAGO: The *Scarlet Ibis*, a 350 foot ship that ferried passengers and cargo between Trinidad and Tobago, has been intentionally sunk in 100 feet of water. It forms the foundation for an artificial reef near Mount Irvine Beach Resort on Tobago's southwestern coast. The historic event occurred through the efforts of Tourism and Industrial Development Company (TIDCO), Ltd. and the Tobago Dive Operators Association in association with the Coastal Diving Services.

The *Scarlet Ibis*, re-named *Maverick*,

settled on a sandy flat and divers have reported seeing coral polyps on the hull and schools of six foot Codfish.

TIDCO (and up to 30 marine related groups and individuals) had been working on the project for the past eight months, underscoring the magnitude and importance of the exercise. The ship had to be cleaned and prepared for inspection and approved for sinking by the Director Lieutenant Commander of Maritime Services Division.

For more information on travel and diving in Tobago, contact TIDCO at (888) 595-4TNT or (800) 595-1TNT. 🐠

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SSI's Enriched Air Nitrox Course

ADDED BENEFITS, INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY

BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

The use of nitrox in everyday recreational diving is skyrocketing. Just look through the pages of SKIN DIVER for the previous six to eight months. You will see live-aboard after live-aboard and dive shop after dive shop advertising nitrox availability. There is a good reason for this. If used correctly and safely, nitrox can increase your bottom time when compared to normal air. It reduces the introduction of nitrogen to your system, allowing you to make longer multiple dives, as you would on a live-aboard or a dive holiday. When used with air tables, nitrox may reduce your chances of getting bent. But, there is a definite bottom limit to every nitrox mixture, a hard deck as it were. Going below this limit can result in oxygen toxicity, even with only a 10 foot margin of error. To help you better understand the complexities and benefits of this type of diving, SSI (Scuba Schools International) now offers a simple to understand, yet comprehensive recreational nitrox certification specialty course.

Using nitrox requires special training, preparation and pre-dive planning. The first element of the SSI course is the manual. The easy to read text covers each component step by step and reinforces each lesson with review questions at the end of each chapter. The first chapter gives an overview of nitrox, its misperceptions, benefits and limitations. Chapter two delves into the physics and physiology of diving on nitrox, including depth limitations, oxygen toxicity and the concept of partial pressure of oxygen as the determining factor of nitrox depth and time limitations. Chapter three presents an overview of equipment considerations for diving with enriched air. This includes cylinder markings and the need to analyze every tank of nitrox before you dive with it. Unlike regular airfills, nitrox mixtures vary, requiring divers to

personally check the oxygen content of each and every tank. The manual covers the use of the specialized tools for this task and the safety procedures required of both the dive shop and the diver.

The essence of nitrox is the ratio of oxygen to nitrogen. The two most popular mixtures are EAN 32 (32 percent oxygen) and EAN 36 (36 percent oxygen), also known as nitrox I and nitrox II. (The air we breathe contains approximately 21 percent oxygen.) But, nitrox fills can vary from between 22 and 40 percent oxygen and each percentage level has specific time and depth limits. A specialized set of dive tables is included with the SSI course; their use is similar to that of regular tables.

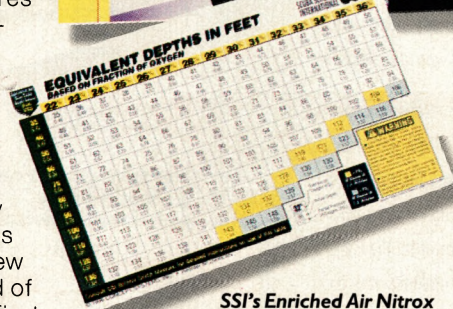
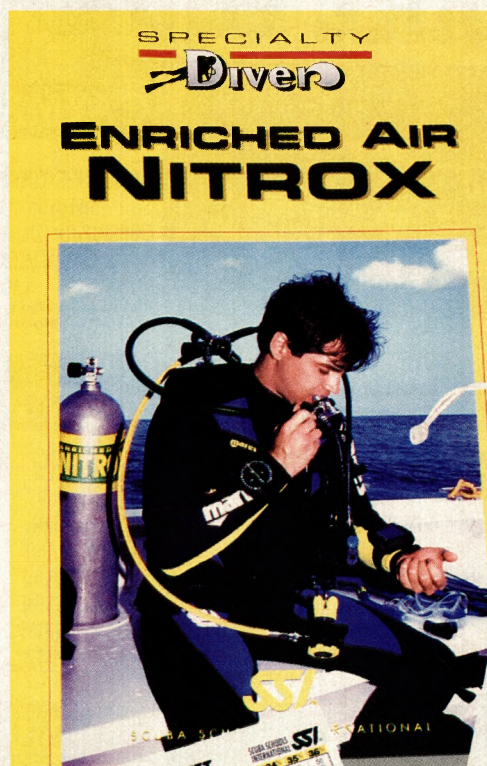
Chapter four goes over the real skill of nitrox diving: use of these special nitrox tables in preparation for the dive. Here, comprehensive instructions

in the use of the Equivalent Depth/CNS "Clock" Exposure Time Table and the Combined Air/ EANx dive tables are given. There are some detailed specifics that are too much for the scope of this review but the manual explains each step clearly and concisely and, with a little practice, their use should become second nature.

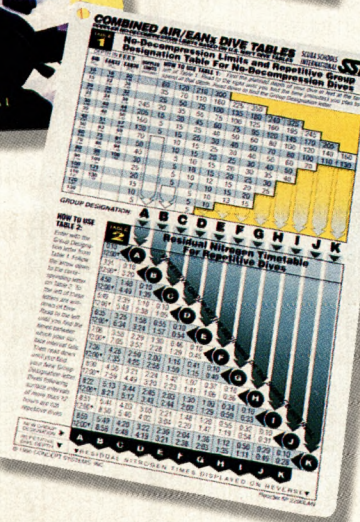
Diving on nitrox has many benefits. But, just as in life, with privilege comes added responsibility. I would suggest nitrox training for divers with better than average basic skills, including excellent buoyancy control, and a good many dives logged under a variety of conditions. The SSI Enriched Air Nitrox course manual and tables (along with the classroom and open

water instruction) offer complete and thorough training in this very worthwhile and advantageous specialty skill.

For more information on an SSI training facility near you, contact SSI at 2619 Canton Court, Fort Collins, Colorado 80525-4498; (970) 482-0883, fax (970) 482-6157 or visit the Web site at <http://www.ssiusa.com>.



SSI's Enriched Air Nitrox manual, special nitrox dive tables and tank label.





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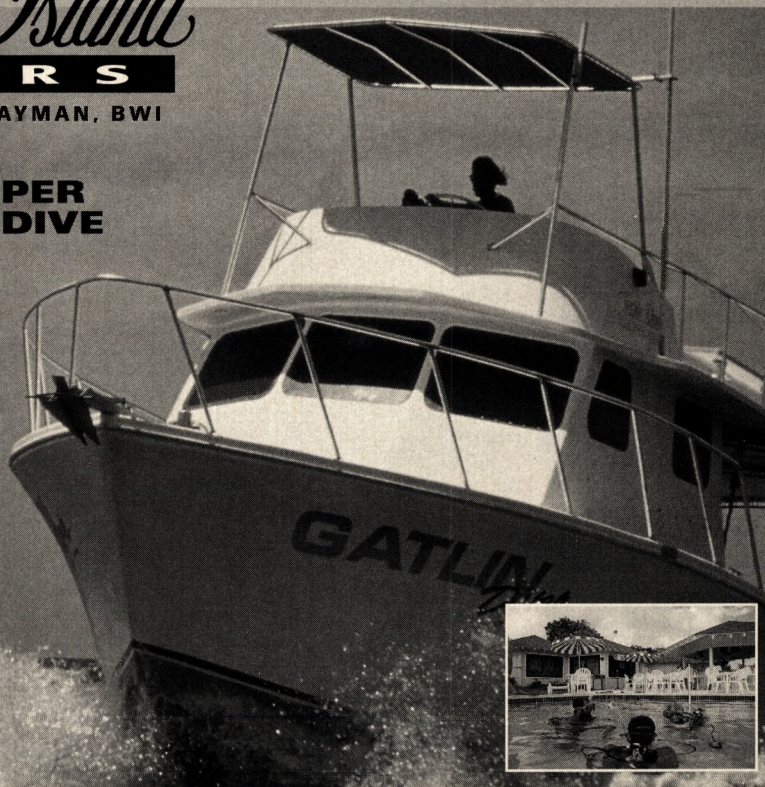
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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY WALT STEARNS



Top: Off Curacao, the color orange is as given, as with these Orange Cup Corals on the *Superior Producer*. **Middle:** The Princess Beach Resort and Casino. **Above:** Princess Divers' boats can each comfortably transport 20 divers to Curacao's best sites.



In the clear waters of Curacao the wreck of the ***Superior Producer*** is a striking sight. More than 250 feet long, sitting on an even keel with her superstructure intact, the big freighter seems to drip with color. From stem to stern, her steel skeleton has become an energetic biosphere of corals, sponges and small fish.

The coral species *Tubastrea coccinea*—Orange Cup or Orange Flower Coral, as they are sometimes called—is visibly abundant here. An explosion of vibrant orange and red interlaced with splashes of deep yellow is revealed in the flash of a strobe or dive light. Complementing the scene, bright red bodied Blackbar Soldierfish occupy the interior of the *Producer's* wheelhouse.

Several years ago, as the *Producer* was preparing to enter Willemstad Harbor with a load of cargo, a mishap sent her quickly to the bottom at 104 feet. Although this is considered a deep dive, there is a wide depth profile, with the wheelhouse at 70 feet and the top of the aft cargo boom (in front of the wheelhouse superstructure) at 40 feet. The EAN 32 (nitrox) we were us-

ing increased our bottom time to almost an hour without going into decompression. Now that's diving!

Looking the wreck over, I realized it is a site such as this that makes Curacao a sleeping giant among the Caribbean's long list of diving destinations. This alone would explain why Peter Hughes, a name synonymous with one of the world's largest live-aboard fleets, would establish a shore based operation on this middle island in the ABC group.

Princess Divers, managed by dive industry veterans Bo and Lex Kleine, is an intrinsic part of the beautiful and posh Princess Beach Resort and Casino. On a corner of the resort's grounds (next to the Ambassador Wing), Princess Divers features a small, quaint shop atmosphere. The staff members know your name from the moment you sign in.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Princess Divers/Princess Beach vacations are known for:

- Comfort and convenience
- Dramatic drop-offs
- Striking wrecks
- Colorful marine life

Besides being the first and only operation on the island to offer enriched airfills (both EAN 32 and 36), this is Curacao's only nitrox training and certification facility. Princess Divers' PADI nitrox course takes two days, includes a two tank boat dive and costs \$165. If you are already nitrox certified, enriched air is a \$6 per fill with your boat and shore dive packages.

DIVING CURACAO

Curacao's fringing reef system, spanning its leeward side from the northwest tip to the lower southeastern point, offers a whopping 65 identified dive sites. Although a large number of them are accessible from shore, several are not, making a boat the most effective and convenient means for diving.

Princess Divers' trio of dedicated vessels includes two 41 foot, custom built Michael Fitz models—*Curacao Princess* and *Curacao Dutchess*—and one custom 35 foot catamaran named *Cat*

land's lower east point.

Along this stretch are more than 15 excellent sites, most of which are drop-offs that begin 30 to 37 feet from the surface and descend into the dark shadow world of the deep. Some of the popular sites include **Shipwreck Point**, **Lost Anchor** and **Beacon Point**, which start from a narrow, shallow reef flat 5 to 20 feet deep and drop at an 80 degree angle to a depth of several hundred feet. Along their near vertical contours are large dense growths of soft corals, with scattered heads of Brain, Star and Boulder Corals, sprays of Purple Tube Sponges and

rounded mounds of Orange Elephant Ear Sponges. Attached to some of the taller sponges, divers will sometimes find large Black and White Crinoids with arms splayed out like fanciful creatures from a sci-fi movie. The farther east you go, the steeper the drop-offs, becoming nearly vertical at a site named **East Point Drop-off**. Between the sponges and Curacao's bountiful Creole Wrasse, the colors orange and purple appear everywhere.

Bonaire is well known for its Town Pier and Curacao has a site that is just as alluring. **Old Pier**, as it is called, is actually
(Continued on Page 154)

PRINCESS BEACH RESORT AND CASINO

The luxurious grounds of the Princess Beach Resort and Casino occupy a sprawling 1,600 foot tract of beachfront property, just beyond the city limits of Willemstad. Princess Beach Resort overlooks the beginning of Curacao's National Underwater Park system. An affiliate to Holiday Inn's worldwide franchise, the Princess Beach is a Crowne Plaza Resort, the chain's highest standard of hotel/resorts.

Accommodations among the resort's seven buildings include 143 deluxe rooms, 108 superior rooms, 21 time share units, eight suites and one penthouse. Creature comforts include air-conditioning, large, comfortable king and queen sized beds, phones with direct international dialing, private terrace or balcony with furnishings and much more. Time share units feature a complete kitchenette. While electricity in the Ambassador Wing is 220 volts, the resort can provide any necessary adapter on request. All other guest wings have 110 volts.

Guests have just about everything needed to make a vacation complete, with two swimming pools, three restaurants, casino, boutique, gift shop and drugstore, tennis courts, exercise room, playground and nursery for the youngsters, as well as a beauty salon. The resort even provides complimentary shuttle service twice daily to and from the city of Willemstad.

Dancer. Besides being able to transport 20 divers comfortably with a cruising speed of up to 25 knots, all boats are equipped with marine heads, large dive platforms with ladders, camera tables and rinse buckets, freshwater showers, cold drinking water, juice or tea, as well as all the required electronic gear, first aid supplies and oxygen.

Leaving the dock daily around 9:30 for its two tank morning trip, Princess Divers concentrates a large part of its diving in Curacao's eastern quarter, from the wreck of the *Superior Producer* to the is-

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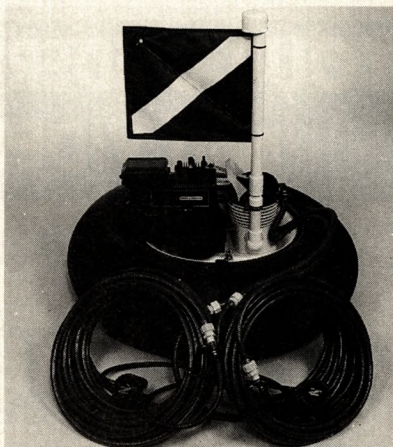
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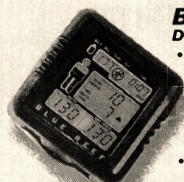
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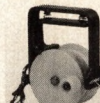
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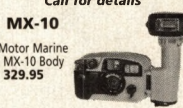
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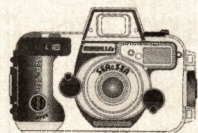
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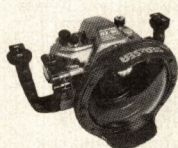
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FANTASY ISLAND RESORT

(Continued from Page 134)

immediate and accessible shore diving, luxurious accommodations on a private island, and, with a dock and boats on both coasts, easy access to Roatan's best diving.

Being able to dive both sides of Roatan is a big asset. This is not one of those islands with an obvious diving coast. One side faces southeast, which is almost always direct or diagonal to the tradewinds. Roatan's southside is almost always choppy but seldom rough. The other side faces the northwest, which is usually calm, except during a north'er, an infrequent storm that can make conditions on the northern coast very nasty.

The reefs on both sides are good but different.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Fantasy Island Resort,
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known for:

- Luxurious accommodations
- Diving both sides of Roatan
- Great shore diving
- Complete watersports

Experienced local divers constantly argue about which side is best. The southside has a close hugging fringing reef interrupted occasionally by a bay or a lagoon. The reef is generally very close to shore and the drop-off often begins in only 25 feet of water. Really classic dive sites on the south coast, close to Fantasy Island, abound. There is the wreck of the **Prince Albert**, an intact island freighter in 60 feet of water, and one-half mile of excellent drop-off right in front of the resort that can be easily reached on a shore dive. Other sites nearby include **Forty Foot Point**, a sheer drop-off where schools of Bermuda Chubs and other fishes congregate and the **Valley of the Kings**, where reef crevices are decorated with bouquets of sponges.

In contrast, Roatan's north coast offers a barrier reef formation—formidable ramparts, usually one-quarter mile or so from shore interrupted only occasionally by narrow cuts. A really classic and very different kind of dive site can be found here. An example, again close to Fantasy Island's dock, is **Wall Street**, a mini wall that is absolutely vertical and 100 yards long.

The ideal situation, weather and reef wise, is to be able to dive both coasts. But, it's a considerable distance around long, narrow Roatan. Fantasy Island has the answer: Just east of the resort is an access road that leads from the resort to a northside dock, where one or more of its boats are kept permanently.

Hank Hynds, an instructor and Roatan local with 20 years of dive experience, heads Fantasy Island's dive op-

eration. Hank and his team of seasoned skippers and divemasters offer morning and afternoon boat diving with guaranteed access during the week to both sides of Roatan, weather permitting. Southside trips, normally one tank outings, run at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 2:30 pm; northside excursions are usually two tank dives. The full service dive center, along with a fleet of 42 to 44 foot custom dive boats, is on the west end of the resort property, a short walk from the hillside and beachside guestwings.

Shore diving is facilitated by a charming and practical dive gazebo, which extends into the sea from the east end of the property. No need to lug tanks back and forth from the dive center; just ask and they will bring tanks to the gazebo at a requested time and pick up the empties after the dive. It's a short swim from the gazebo to the shipwreck and the wall.

Fantasy Island's position as a resort is also unique on Roatan. This is the only luxury resort on the island that is dedicated to diving. What this simply means is that if ambiance, good food, a private beach, swimming pool, tennis courts, complete watersports and a fully air-conditioned resort with in-room TV and phones, are important to you, then you really have only one choice for a dive resort in the Bay Islands of Honduras.

The resort's physical presence is most impressive. The entire "village" (with the exception of the north dock facility) is on a 15 acre private island connected by a bridge to Roatan. Built in 1989, with renovations and additions ever since, the resort is nestled in palms, pines, fruit and flower trees. Nearly one-quarter mile of white sand beach forms a crescent facing the sea. A large, double winged modern building with a traditional touch houses the huge reception lobby and business offices and, on the upper level, there is a restaurant, lounge and spacious conference room. Serving snacks and meals



Fantasy Island's guestrooms are beautifully furnished, with air-conditioning, satellite TV, direct dial phones and a refrigerator.

throughout the day is another alfresco restaurant and bar seaside, underneath a thatched roofed palapa. Beachfront guestrooms are on two floors of both wings. Two additional guestroom wings are closer to the dive shop and marina and, as a result, are often requested by divers. There are 82 rooms total; all similar in

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For more information, contact Fantasy Island Travel Services at (800) 6 ROATAN (676-2826) or (813) 353-9414, fax (813) 353-0154. The direct line at the resort is (011) 504-45-5222. You can also visit the Web site at <http://www.empg.com/fantasy-island>.

PRINCESS DIVERS/ PRINCESS BEACH

(Continued from Page 143)

two large piers spaced some 600 feet apart. The first is a 200 foot wide structure extending about 150 feet out to a short, sloping bottom with a depth of 40 feet. The smaller, 130 foot wide structure, extends to 30 feet. Underwater, both piers' large, round concrete and steel columns resemble densely clustered tree trunks in an old growth pine forest. Here, the short, stubby branches and bark are brightly colored sponges and Orange Cup Corals. These columns are a macro photographer's dream, hosting myriad Christmas Tree and Feather Duster Worms, small crustaceans and fish. At the top of the slope,

in the coral rubble (at 15 feet), is a large colony of Cherubfish (*Centropyge argi*), rarely found in depths less than 60 feet.

Near the Old Pier are two tugboat wrecks resting in the 15 foot shallows above the reef's drop-off. A popular spot for Princess Divers' snorkel trips (Tuesday

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and Thursday morning and afternoon), the tugs sit upright, with their steel decking and pilothouse framing covered with dense colonies of Orange Cup Corals.

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THIS AD GOOD THRU AUGUST 1997

able, particularly during hurricane season, Princess Divers will run day trips to Klein Curacao to experience some virgin diving. Because of the island's position south of the hurricane belt, hurricanes often create calmer seas throughout the Antilles region. The two hour trip from Princess Divers' dock to the tiny island of Klein Curacao, three miles off Curacao's southeastern tip, is ideal during this time. For a storm to cause problems in the ABC islands is truly rare.

Curacao offers some of the hottest shore diving in the Caribbean. Go anywhere a road passes close to the ocean and there will likely be a terrific dive site just a short distance out. As a rule, Curacao's sloping reefs lie very close to the shore, often less than 100 feet from the high tide mark. At the foot of both Princess Divers and Princess Beach Resort and Casino is **House Reef**, featuring a drop-off similar in profile to Shipwreck Point, with a second site called **Cemetery** a short swim to the west.

Cemetery (or Car Pile) is a manmade reef comprised of several old auto bodies, dating back to the '50s and early '60s, a medium sized barge and a crane in a section of the reef from a depth of 50 feet to 110. The crane, still fully intact, was supposedly used to build part of the hotel, until it could no longer be repaired. Covering it and the rest of these metal hulks are myriad sponges and small corals, including more Orange Cup Corals.

For macro photography, both House Reef and Cemetery offer a wealth of small subjects, including a family of Reef Squid, Frogfish and Seahorses. All of this should come in handy, considering Princess Beach Resort and Princess Divers will be hosting the Nikonos Shootout September 14 through 19, 1997. Even if you opt not to participate in the event, bring a camera anyway.

GETTING THERE

Servicing Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire, from both Miami and Atlanta International, is the island's national air carrier, ALM (Antillean Airlines). Departing two to three



times daily from Miami, flight time to Curacao is approximately three to three and a half hours, owing to one or two short stops in between.

For more information on diving packages with Princess Beach Resort and Casino and Princess Divers, contact Peter Hughes Diving at 1390 Dixie Highway, Suite 1109, Coral Gables, FL 33146; (800) 9-DANCER or (305) 669-9391; fax (305) 669-9475.



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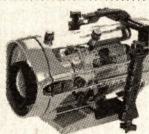
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Excess Caution Leads to Diver's First Underwater Emergency

BY MITCH COLEMAN

For the experienced diver, a novice dive buddy can provide an instant refresher course in underwater safety.

My friend Jenny had recently been certified and was making her fifth open water dive when we stepped off a pier into the calm, clear waters of Bonaire. I had brought Jenny to this island because it offers some of the easiest and most beautiful diving in the Caribbean. It seemed the perfect place to put a novice diver at ease.

The dive began smoothly. We descended to 60 feet and began cruising the reef. We were surrounded by feeding schools of Creole Wrasse and dogged by the ever-present, ever-hungry Yellowtail Snappers. Then, in one frightening moment, Jenny's worst fears were realized. As I looked on from just a few feet away, she stopped, took a quick look at her gauge console, turned to me and began frantically making the throat slashing gesture she had practiced so often in the pool during her certification class.

Rushing to her side, I offered her my octopus. After waiting a few moments for her to calm down, I checked her air pressure gauge and was surprised to see it read 2,500 psi. I reached for her regulator and drew a breath. Not only was it difficult to draw but, with each breath, the indicator dropped from 2,500 down to zero, then back again.

Back on shore I examined her tank and found the valve had only been turned on halfway. When I turned it on full, the regulator functioned normally. Jenny realized she had turned the knob all the way and then half a crank back. But, because of her anxiety about diving, she often double, triple and even quadruple-checked her equipment. While making one of these checks she forgot she had already turned her air on. She ended up turning it all the way off and half a crank on.

At sea level there was enough air getting past the valve to fool her (and her pressure indicator) into thinking her tank valve was open. But, at 60 feet, the regulator couldn't provide enough air to meet her demands. Fortunately, she stayed calm and responded to her training.

Later we both laughed at how her excess caution had actually caused her first dive emergency. But, the emergencies weren't over.

it unlikely she was bent but he thought the oxygen might help to calm her while we discussed other possibilities.


After breathing oxygen for about an hour, her symptoms hadn't abated but she did feel calmer now believing she wasn't experiencing the bends. The dry air made her thirsty and it was then we discovered the problem—she was simply dehydrated.

She had forgotten that diving depletes the body of moisture and that a diver should drink lots of liquids, even if he or she isn't thirsty. After consuming large quantities of water and getting a good night's sleep, Jenny greeted the new day ready for diving. Now it was my turn to be nervous. What would happen next?

In the years since these early diving adventures, Jenny and I have gotten married. We've also completed training for our advanced open water certifications and logged more than 100 dives together. These two mini-emergencies helped cement our bond, both as life partners and dive partners. Fortunately we've had no problems since but the lessons we both learned have stayed with us on every dive.

Before entering the water, have your buddy check your air. (I should have done this in Bonaire. I never fail to do it now.) Once underwater, never stray too far from your buddy. Even 20 feet can seem like a mile when you're out of air and fighting panic.

On shore, drink plenty of liquids, even when you aren't thirsty. And remember, alcohol acts as a diuretic and can cause you to pass more liquids than you are taking in. If you're drinking alcohol be sure to supplement it with plenty of water.

These are simple lessons and ones we all learned in our first two weeks of dive class. But, thanks to the education I got from my novice partner, they are lessons I will never forget. 

I LEARNED

Before entering the water, have your buddy check your air.

Once underwater, never stray too far from your buddy. Even 20 feet can seem like a mile when you're out of air and fighting panic.

Drink plenty of liquids, even when you aren't thirsty. And remember, alcohol acts as a diuretic.

After three days of diving we were enjoying an oceanfront dinner with our dive group when Jenny suddenly began to feel strange. She experienced numbness in her right arm and side. She felt dizzy and disoriented. Her first thought was that she had somehow gotten bent and was just beginning to feel the effects. This caused her some degree of anxiety that added to her symptoms.

I called the divemaster over and he suggested we move Jenny back to her room and put her on oxygen. He thought

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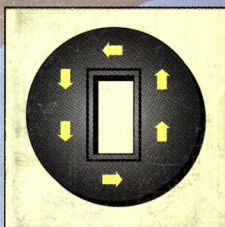


Horizontal holder for ballast weights

For the technical diver, freedom of movement and control are essential, as is equipment adaptable to all kinds of demanding conditions. The weight-integrated back-mount design of Mares new Syncro Tech B/C vest combines a light, highly durable structure with the most advanced features.

Innovative shoulder straps: Multi-layer polyurethane padding and 1200 D nylon provide unmatched tensile strength and comfort. Designed to prevent entangling and equipped with highly resistant quick-adjust and quick-release buckles. Four 50 mm (1 3/4") D-rings are positioned on the shoulder adjustment pull strap and four 50 mm (1 3/4") D-rings are fastened at the bottom of the vest.

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Free circulation of air

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